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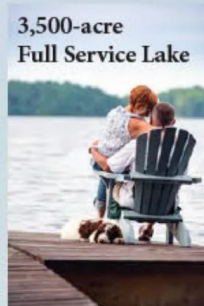
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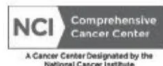
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Mayor Danny Avula

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from the
EDITOR
MINDY KINSEY



'SO I WAS WONDERING...'

One of the fun things about working for a magazine is that we can call pretty much anyone in our coverage zone and talk to them. Admittedly in the past we've had trouble getting in touch with Gov. Glenn Youngkin, but Sen. Tim Kaine takes our calls — and so do countless business owners, executives, experts, entertainers, museum curators, medical professionals, restaurateurs and regular people who happen to have interesting hobbies. Most people who have questions turn to the internet; we publishing people call and ask, journalism giving us license to unbridle our curiosity.

When Lauren Vincelli heard a rumor that Redemption BBQ in Short Pump, lauded by Southern Living for its 'cue, also

has amazing deep-dish pizza, she went to check; her findings are on Page 86. D. Hunter Reardon read that sturgeon are successfully spawning in the James River but their population isn't growing, so he consulted a scientist at VCU and shares the explanation on Page 20. And it's not just locals on our calling list: Davy Jones asked members of the Los Angeles-based jazz band the Yellowjackets about their new music merely on the strength of their upcoming visit to Richmond (Page 36).

I tasked writer Ian M. Stewart with tracking down a more general query: What's up with Petersburg? I had heard the historic hotel was finally reopening (it did last month), we've reported that pharmaceutical companies are flocking to the area and, of course, in November the city voted to welcome a casino. In an article that satiates my need to know for now, Ian

reports that Petersburg itself is not only up, but rising fast (Page 58).

News editor Mark Newton attended appointments with the incoming and outgoing mayors of Richmond last month armed with a slew of questions. He asked Danny Avula how being a doctor prepared him to be mayor and wondered what Levar Stoney would have done with more time in City Hall. Their answers to those questions and many more start on Page 70.

What's going on with that kava place on Main Street? Who's taking over at the ICA? Are people really using film cameras again? And sewing is back, too? How do you get funding for arts projects, anyway? Is it true there aren't enough farm veterinarians? Or X-ray technicians? Have you heard young adults don't drink much? ... Those are just a few of the questions we answer in this issue. If there's something you'd like to

CONTRIBUTORS



Kelsey Robinson

A California native, Kelsey Robinson studied

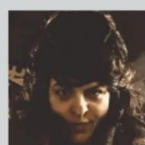
English at Northern Arizona University before attending James Madison University for grad school and falling in love with Virginia. She joined Richmond magazine as associate editor in November and is looking forward to getting to know the RVA community. Robinson enjoys writing, indoor bouldering, playing video games, painting and watching good (and bad) movies.



Abbi Bennett

Born and raised in Winston-Salem, North

Carolina, Abbi Bennett is a recent graduate of VCUArts. She freelanced for Richmond magazine during her undergrad years and is excited for the opportunity to remain in Richmond as a full-time graphic designer with the magazine. Outside of work, Bennett enjoys trying new restaurants, cuddling up with her favorite rom-com and strolling Carytown looking for unique pieces.



Lauren Vincelli

A lifelong Richmonder, University of Richmond

alum, chef, writer, creative community organizer and folk historian, Lauren Vincelli is the founder of developer collective RVA Game Jams and the gatherings Mushroom Mania RVA and Richmond Moon Market. She digs into deep-dish pizza on Page 86.



Jamie Douglas

An illustrator and obsessive sketch-booker living

in Richmond, Jamie Douglas has been drawing practically since birth. He teaches classes on sketchbooking, fantasy cartography and monster design at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond and also makes zines and tabletop role-playing game accessories. Douglas illustrated our story on new trends in drinking (Page 108).



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from the
PUBLISHER
RICHARD MALKMAN



OVERDRESSED FOR THE OCCASION

Now that it's winter, I can't leave the house without a coat. My mother's voice is still stuck in my head, reminding me to wear my heavy coat when I go out. And while I was searching for my winter coat, she also made sure I had the scarf she had knitted for me. She made it when I was in first grade and when I grew older, it just didn't fit anymore. It looked more like a handkerchief, and I definitely couldn't wrap it around my neck, but I would always take it with me just to make her feel good. I didn't want to hurt her feelings.

My mom always made me overdress for the occasion. One time, she asked me to wear snow boots to school on a day with a 10% snow forecast. I just couldn't explain to my friends why I had boots on when every one of them was still wearing sneakers. After a while, I convinced them that my mom was a meteorologist, and she knew about snow. That might explain why so many of my friends would call my house for a weather update. She was always wrong. I think they did it because they wanted to stay home just in case.

Another thing I don't like about winter is that the sun sets so much earlier that it's dark out in the afternoon.

As a kid, I couldn't go out to play, which forced me to really do my homework. There was no way of getting around it. My parents saw that I was home and that could only mean chores or homework. I hated both of them. I always wondered why my sisters couldn't do some of the chores. They could stop studying for a moment and help me vacuum or fold the clothes. Folding clothes is still not my strong suit. Why

“
Folding clothes is still not my strong suit. Why can't I just throw the clothes in a drawer unfolded?”

can't I just throw the clothes in a drawer unfolded? And if they are in the drawer, who is going to notice if they have creases? You would think that my parents would have stopped asking me to do chores when I was that bad at it, but no. My entire family always had large creases in their shirts, and I was the only one who noticed.

In case you were wondering, my childhood mishaps have stayed with me for a lifetime. Just last week, I ventured into the kitchen after midnight to have a cup of tea. It was dark and I didn't want to wake anyone by turning the lights on, so I attempted to fill my cup with hot water from the dispenser and put liquid soap in the cup instead. Both dispensers looked the same in the dark. The tea tasted funny, but at least I didn't wake anybody up! **R**

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LOCAL



ASH DANIEL

A new farmer's market is coming to Manchester [P. 18](#)

To save sturgeon, VCU scientists use the latest tech [P. 20](#)

Report details progress in fixing city government [P. 22](#)

Though few, vets are key to farms [P. 26](#)

Flashback: Celebrate Poe's "Sweet 216" birthday [P. 30](#)

Edited by MARK NEWTON

BUSINESS

FRESH BEGINNINGS

A new farmers market targets food access in Manchester

Marie D'Angelo and Mo Karnage knew when they decided to start a farmers market that there was a lot of competition in the Richmond area. So, they looked to a place that needs more fresh food: Manchester. Their Richmond Grower's Market, launching May 3, is aimed at addressing the food desert issue there and connecting with people from all walks of life.

"It's a good area that needs access to food. Manchester has been [a] food desert needing a decent grocery store for a very long time — and by no means is a farmers market a substitute for a grocery store, but it's definitely a step in the right direction," Karnage says.

Richmond Grower's Market wants vendors who make or grow the products being sold. Karnage says the market, while not a nonprofit, is working to accept EBT, and they hope to be involved with the Virginia Fresh Match program.

"We want the customers at the

market to feel confident that the stuff they're buying is legit, it didn't come from Restaurant Depot or Sysco," they say. "You can support dozens and dozens of local businesses through a market if it's run well, if it's curated well."

The market will be held at Legend Brewing Co. every Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon through Oct. 25. Karnage says the owners of the brewpub understand the potential benefits of hosting a farmers market in Manchester.

D'Angelo, who founded the Richmond Makers Market, and Karnage, owner of Karnage Construction, also are opening a coffee shop and bookstore in Highland Park, By Any Beans Necessary, and they're organizing a pride parade planned for June 2.

For the farmers market, both are working with the local neighborhood association, Manchester Alliance, and want to hear from residents how they can make the market bigger and better. Karnage has envisioned programming

such as workshops, yoga classes and musical performances.

"We're actually here to help the community be healthier and stronger and everything by bringing in folks and having more than just shopping," they say. "You don't have to just come there and spend money. You can come and there are activities that are free, that are accessible, that could basically benefit most folks." —*Alyssa Hutton*



FROM TOP: COURTESY RICHMOND GROWER'S MARKET; COURTESY VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES; ADOBE STOCK

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14 lbs., 12 oz.

The weight of Grant Bentz's record-breaking rainbow trout caught June 9 in Spring Creek, located northwest of Bridgewater. The heft of the 33-inch-long fish broke a state record set in 1993 by 5 ounces, the Department of Wildlife Resources says.

11

VCU researchers on the 2024 Stanford Elsevier Top Scientists List, which tracks scientific influence through citations, co-authorships and other factors. Three School of Medicine faculty members were ranked in the top 1,000 of all researchers worldwide based on activity in the previous year: Drs. Arun Sanyal, Kenneth Kendler and Jasmohan Bajaj.



Briante Weber's jersey number, which VCU retired on Dec. 22. "Briante stands out as the best on-the-ball defender in the history of college basketball, who left an undeniable impact on our program that will last for generations to come. I am thrilled we can raise his jersey into the Siegel Center rafters forever," says VCU Vice President and Director of Athletics Ed McLaughlin.



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Increase in curbside recycling collected last fiscal year in Henrico, Hanover and Goochland counties, according to the Central Virginia Waste Management Authority. The growth comes after CVWMA delivered 92,000 95-gallon wheeled bins to residents of the three counties in 2023.

100

Richmond's result on the Human Rights Campaign's annual Municipal Equality Index regarding laws and support for its LGBTQ+ residents. The city has received a perfect score five years in a row.



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ENVIRONMENT

CALL OF THE WILD

VCU's ongoing efforts to protect spawning sturgeon

By D. Hunter Reardon

Matt Balazik's long, strange journey with Atlantic sturgeon began when he joined Virginia Commonwealth University in 2001 to conduct age and growth studies on a fish considered a living fossil. Three years later, there was a breakthrough: A juvenile Atlantic sturgeon was found in the river for the first time in several decades. Balazik has been tracking them from VCU's Rice Rivers Center in Charles City County ever since.

The good news is that the fish has returned in strong numbers to popular spawning spots near Osborne Landing. It was once thought that sturgeon — a major food source for generations of Native Americans — had suffered from

so much overfishing and habitat destruction during the late 19th century that there was no longer a viable population in the James River.

The bad news, Balazik says, is that only one crop of fish born in the James since 2010 seems to have successfully developed past the larval stage. "Since we started to do this work back in 2010, we have captured 602 juveniles born in the James River; 598 of those were born in 2018," he says.

The unhappy conclusion: Despite the spectacular spawning that occurs in Richmond each September, with energetic males breaching the water as far upriver as 14th Street, only four other juvenile specimens have been captured since 2010 that weren't born in the fall of 2018.

"We don't know what's wrong," Bala-

zik says. "I don't think it's the eggs developing that's the issue. Some of us think there may be predation — we all know blue catfish are an issue."

But there's no smoking gun for why those born in 2018 were so successful, or why other spawns have been unsuccessful.

"We've used techniques that work in other rivers; we've brought in people who have had great success in other rivers with a smaller adult population," he says. "We don't have an answer. It's all theories right now."

For the past four years, though, Balazik and his team have worked with Dominion Energy to eliminate a potential variable. The VCU team monitors the arrival of adult female sturgeon tagged with a chip. When spawning is about to start, they alert Dominion, which then shuts off its water pumps near Osborne Landing until the spawning period is over.

"The chance that the pumps will [suck up sturgeon eggs] is low," Balazik says. "But just to be sure, they'll turn the pumps off during spawning season. They remain off for a short period afterward, too, to avoid sucking up any larvae."

While Balazik and his crew continue to search for answers, there is more good news on the horizon. In general, the Atlantic sturgeon — which spends most of its adult life in the ocean — returns to the place it was born to spawn. "In 2028," Balazik says, "we're going to see the first males from that [2018] cohort coming back." ■



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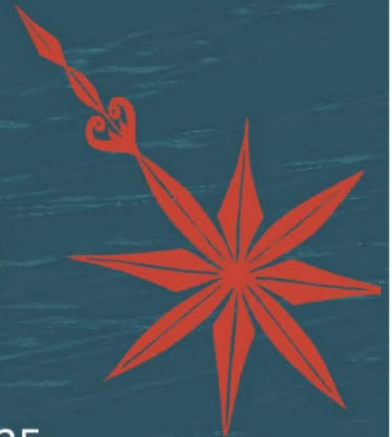
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GOVERNMENT

POINTING TO PROGRESS

A review finds the city has taken big steps to fix problems identified in 2017

By Mark Newton

Despite public perception to the contrary, a performance review of Richmond's government found meaningful improvements in its organizational structure, efficiency and workplace culture over former Mayor Levar Stoney's eight years in office.

In 2017, the then-new mayor asked the Performance Management Group at the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University to interview employees and review documents to identify issues and concerns in the operations of city

government. Issued that May, the report made 228 recommendations for the 19 departments and offices under the mayor's purview. Seven years later, something odd in the world of consultancy happened: Stoney commissioned a follow-up.

The resulting 130-page report — written by TEO Consulting partners Linda Pierce and Jim Burke, who led the 2017 review team — was limited to determining whether city officials had followed through on those recommendations. Due to budget limitations, only department directors were interviewed, unlike in 2017, when employees were also surveyed. "We found that [city leaders] actually took this

very seriously," Burke says. "We also found that a lot of the people who are in positions now are taking this work very seriously, and that is a huge plus."

What TEO discovered was that nearly 90% of the 2017 recommendations had been addressed fully, partially or through an alternative method, "and that's unusual," Burke says. "It's very unusual." He adds that the city's "core functions" — human resources, information technology, procurement services and finance, which were "where we found the biggest issues in 2017" — "are all working in the right direction."

Stoney said in a statement that, >

MARK NEWTON

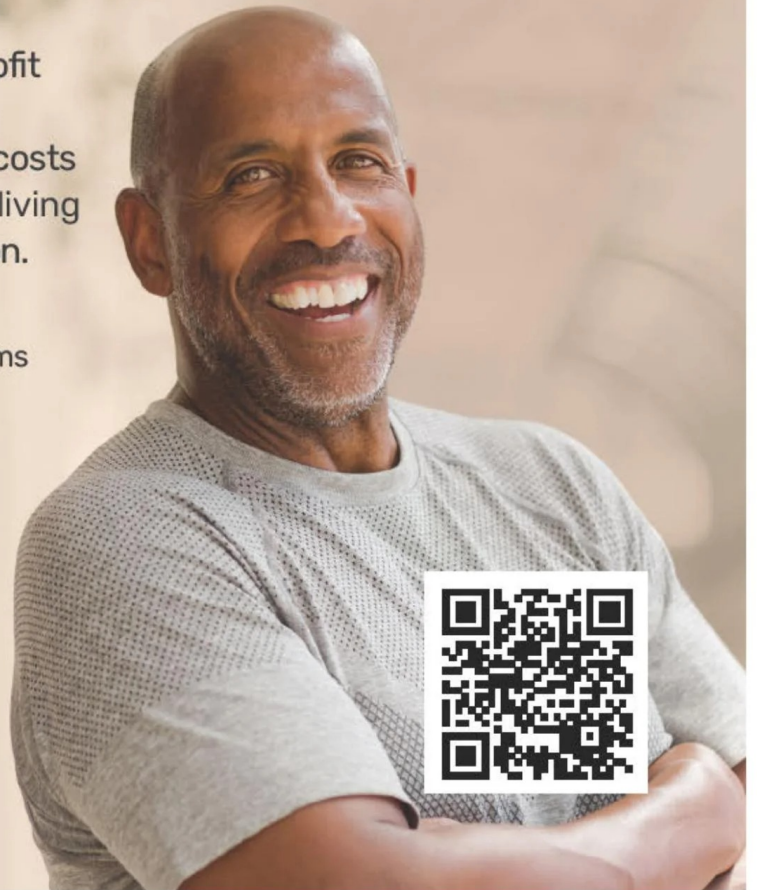
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following the first report, “my commitment was to be about the fix — to break down silos and unnecessary bureaucracy and create a strong cross-functional team that delivers for Richmonders. As this report undeniably shows, we have made significant progress to improve core city agencies and make this city stronger than it was a decade ago.”

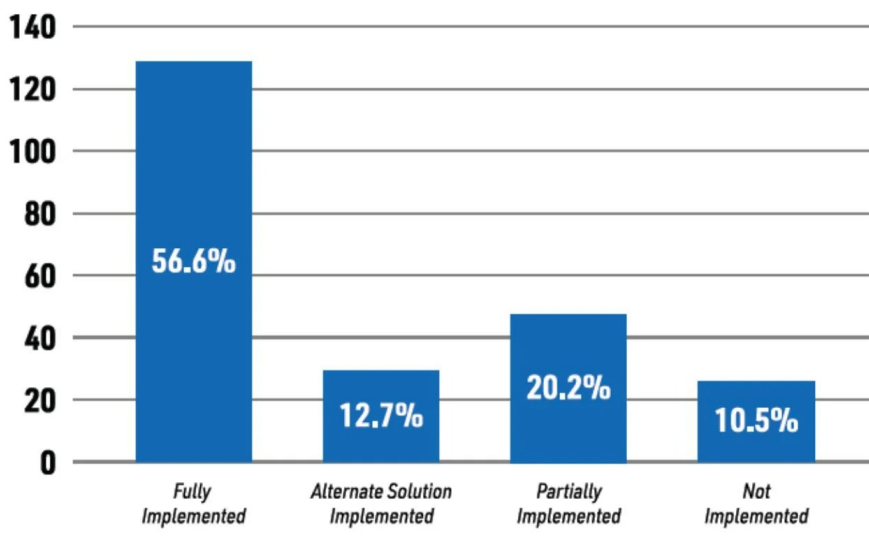
Pierce explains that the city now seems “to have the right people in the right positions, and they’re moving in the right direction. And we would hope that [the new mayor] doesn’t just jump to make change, that they actually analyze the current situation, they look at the progress that has been made, they evaluate the qualifications of who is in the leadership positions, they give clear expectations, and then they evaluate the progress themselves, in addition to hopefully looking at our report.”

The 2024 report also paints a picture of city governance that contrasts with statements made on the campaign trail. For example, all five mayoral candidates said they wanted to replace Chief Administrative Officer Lincoln Saunders over the problems cited in both reports, as well as the city’s recent problems with meals and property taxes.

Incoming Mayor Danny Avula confirmed his intention to hire a new CAO in a December interview with Richmond magazine. “I think that there are a number of really effective and passionate people working in City Hall, and trying to maintain stability is going to be a value,” Avula said, pointing to long-serving Henrico County leaders such as County Manager John Vithoulkas, who started that role in 2013. “That said, there are segments of City Hall where systems and processes have not been tended to and ... sometimes [fixing] that takes a willingness to change leadership and have somebody who’s not entrenched in the way we’ve always done things. I think my job in the early months is to really assess what leaders are heading in the right direction, and where do we need to make a change for the good of

THE RECORD ON RECOMMENDATIONS

How Richmond has acted on the 288 changes suggested in 2017:



the organization.”

However, Stoney told Richmond magazine in a December interview that Saunders “has been the best chief administrative officer this city has had, and results play itself out in that performance review,” adding that “it would be a damn shame that he and others will probably have to depart after I leave office.” Over the weekend following the interview, Saunders told staff he would resign at the end of Stoney’s term on Dec. 31.

Neither Saunders nor Stoney were questioned for the 2024 report, but it found that their department directors improved “engagement, willingness to cooperate and general morale” in City Hall, a conclusion that differs markedly from that of the office culture reported in 2017, which the authors said made employees experience, in their words, a palpable despondency. In a statement, Saunders said he was “proud of the progress we’ve made.”

There remains much to be done to reform city government, as illustrated by an investigation done by City Council’s Office of the Inspector General released Nov. 25. It found enough evidence to sup-

port 25 allegations of misconduct, including nepotism and purchasing card (or P-Card) abuse, against Director of Elections and General Registrar Keith Balmer. Both Pierce and Burke say the incidents demonstrate the effectiveness of careful implementation of P-Cards, which they recommended in 2017.

“P-Cards are the best way of procuring items, but you have to have controls,” Burke says. “Once you put the controls in place with P-Cards, everything runs fine.” Pierce adds: “I think it was a bit of a learning curve [for the city]. I think that they implemented it, and they have learned, and hopefully things will be better moving forward.”

The report authors also say Richmonders should read the entire document to fully understand how the city is being run. “City government is not for everybody; it really isn’t. It’s a lot of thankless work,” Burke says. “I think we see Richmond’s successes and difficulties, but we said that this is a good team. As a resident, I would trust this team to continue to make progress, and the next mayor can decide if that progress is up to their expectations.” **R**

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Dr. Bom Harris (right), owner of Old Dominion Veterinary Services, works with an assistant on a farm in Maidens.

AGRICULTURE

FARM HANDS

Farm veterinarians are vital, but their numbers are dwindling

By Rachel Kester

Agriculture is an essential part of Virginia's economy but, as with other industries in the commonwealth, it has undergone massive changes in recent decades. Small family farms have vanished in favor of industrial sites, and many careers that depend on them have waned, like that of the farm veterinarian.

Exhausting and unpredictable, this medical specialty has become unappealing to many veterinarians, who often prefer the consistency of companion animal practices. A 2023 report by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future found that livestock veterinarians have decreased by 90% since World

War II. Today, only about 5% of veterinarians specialize in this field.

"Without trained and knowledgeable livestock vets with boots on the ground in the community, [the inability] to catch to catch things can quickly spiral out of control," says Dr. Bom Harris, who owns Old Dominion Veterinary Services, a Hanover County-based mobile farm animal practice. "It's important that smaller operations have relationships with farm vets so problems can be addressed."

It's not just commercial settings that require visits from farm veterinarians. The ever-growing interest in backyard pet livestock, which includes chickens and goats, also calls for their expertise.

Parasites and transmittable illnesses, such as avian influenza, can spread from flocks and herds to humans. This has the potential to cause not only grave health crises but also major disruptions to the food supply, and farm veterinarians work to prevent the growth of such diseases.

For almost a decade, Harris has been offering her services to over 25 counties in eastern and Central Virginia. Venturing through the heavily agricultural region in her heavy-duty pickup truck, Harris performs vaccinations and nutrition evaluations on pigs, alpacas and other animals, although her main patients are bovines.

Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Harris attended the Virginia-

ASH DANIEL



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Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. She was first interested in caring for small animals but later found a passion for farm veterinary work. "I fell in love with agricultural animals and never looked back," she says. After graduating in 2008, Harris worked for a regional practice before starting her own in 2016.

"I love the relationship [I have] with farmers to help them keep animals healthy and farms as productive as possible while having an impact on food safety and public health," she says.

However, erratic hours, low wages and expensive schooling can dissuade new vets from servicing farms. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services doesn't officially track the number of large-animal veterinarians, but there has been a noticeable decline. In 2024, the General Assembly established a working group to propose solutions to the shortage, such as debt repayment programs and business loans. Additionally, a new state law

allows trainees applying for licensure to perform veterinary medicine under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

Loans and grants, like the federal Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program, are designed to financially assist farm animal veterinarians in exchange for work in shortage zones. For example, one zone nominated in 2024 by VDACS requires the grant recipient to work in Louisa, Fluvanna or Goochland counties and notes that there are "two known veterinarians providing livestock and poultry service in these counties, and it is critically important to retain them there in providing service to livestock, as without VMLRP, they may focus on small animal practice."

The strenuous job requires an abundance of energy, and days are often filled with funky smells, long drives and grumpy animals. "Working out in all weather and with animals bigger and



Harris prepares goats for surgery while taking an emergency call from another client.

stronger than you wears on you," Harris says.

In addition, farm veterinarians must prepare for sudden agricultural shifts. Harris originally set out to help the local dairy industry, but as these businesses began to disappear over the years, she had to readjust the focus of her practice.

Despite the challenges, Harris says farm veterinary work is well worth it and intriguing in the way it uniquely helps people.

Harris is involved with community 4-H programs and often meets aspiring veterinarians, especially younger kids with strong ambitions of helping animals. But there's a stark difference between the fantastical dreams of a kindergartner and the reality of farm veterinary work.

"I think what I find lacking in older kids is a kind of awareness of the pathway to becoming a veterinarian," Harris says. "There's interest, but no idea [of the need to get] a four-year degree, apply to vet school and what that entails [and] the rigors of the academic process." ■



Harris teaches Virginia State University agriculture students about dairy calf nutrition and biosecurity.

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BY HARRY KOLLATZ JR.

FLASHBACK

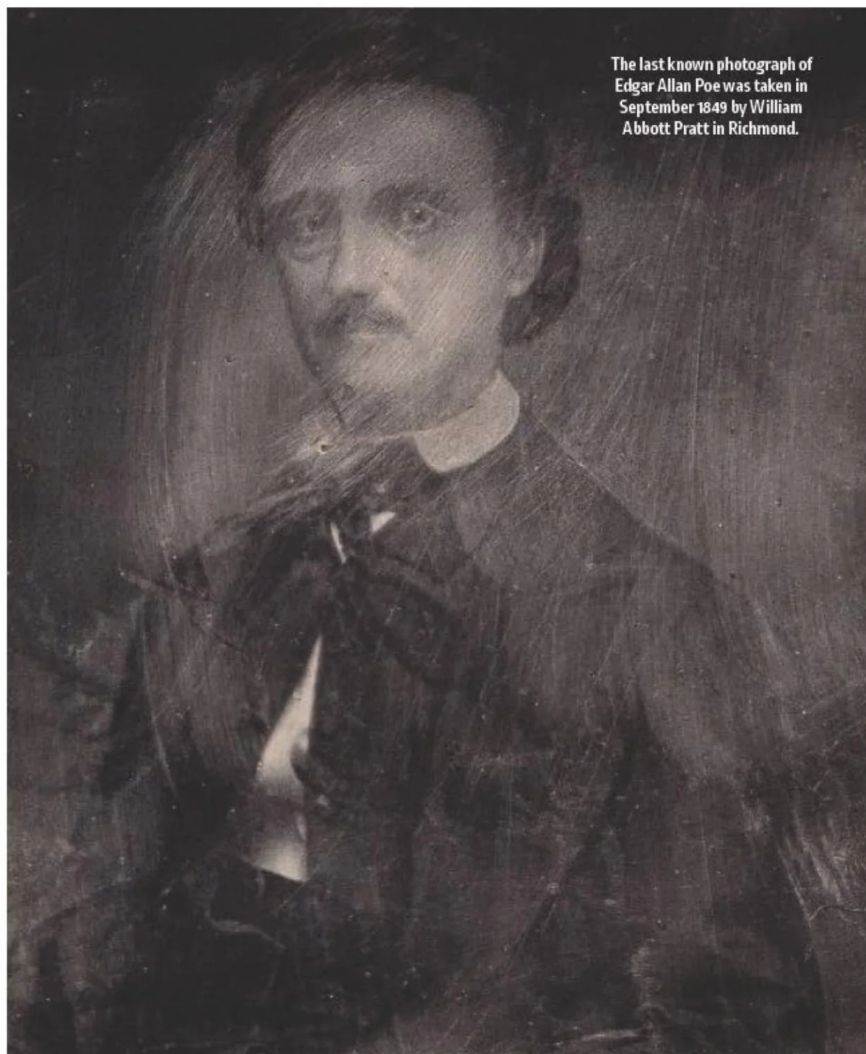
The Man in the White Linen Suit?

Taking a different look at Edgar Allan Poe for his 216th birthday

We may find it difficult to envision Edgar Allan Poe as described by Oscar Penn Fitzgerald, a Methodist bishop, author and editor, just weeks before the Gothic poet's death.

In his memoir, Fitzgerald recounts a "very vivid impression of [Poe] as he was the last time I saw him, on a warm day in 1849," at the offices of the Richmond Weekly Examiner newspaper on the north side of Main Street near 11th Street. "Clad in a spotless white linen suit, with a black velvet vest and a Panama hat, he was a man who would be notable in any company," Fitzgerald wrote.

Poe also carried a walking stick inscribed with his last name upon the silver handle. He left it behind at the 17th and Broad residence of friend and physician John Carter on Sept. 26, 1849. During their hourlong visit, as Carter later recalled, Poe idly played "with a handsome Malacca sword-cane," a gift to Carter from another friend. Poe abruptly left to enjoy supper at the nearby Sadler's restaurant (where a parking lot now stands across from Main Street Station), leaving behind his walking stick and taking the sword-cane. Carter figured Poe would eventually return to his home to reverse the exchange, but instead at 4 a.m. Poe boarded a boat to Baltimore for what became



The last known photograph of Edgar Allan Poe was taken in September 1849 by William Abbott Pratt in Richmond.

his final destination.

Today, the walking stick is in the collection of The Poe Museum, which is celebrating Poe's "Sweet 216" birthday from 6 to 10 p.m. Jan. 18.

Three weeks before Poe absconded with Carter's sword-cane, he relented to the requests for a daguerreotype portrait from another Richmond eccentric, William Abbott Pratt.

The civil engineer, landscape designer, architect and self-described "daugerrean artist" is remembered here for the residence he built in 1854 atop Gamble's Hill called Pratt's Castle. Also known as "Pratt's Folly," the turreted and crenellated struc-

ture sheathed in rolled sheet iron, with its fanciful interior of stained glass and hidden rooms, was one of the city's most photographed buildings until its 1958 demolition to make way for the headquarters of the Ethyl Corporation (now a subsidiary of NewMarket Corporation).

Two small Pratt images are included in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts exhibition "A Long Arc: Photography and the American South since 1845," closing Jan. 26. One is a remarkable circa-1854 image from the window of Pratt's studio on the south side of Main Street near 11th Street, which is where Poe agreed to sit for what would be the last known



Poe left his walking stick, engraved with his name on its silver tip, at the 17th and Broad home of John Carter.



images taken of him.

The writer, hastening down Main, passed by Pratt's studio, where the owner stood in the doorway. He importuned Poe to sit for the promised portrait. Poe protested he's not suitably dressed but consented for a couple of likely reasons: the technical aspects of photography fascinated him, and he also sensed the glimmerings of fame — the picture could be used as an "About the Author" portrait and as a keepsake.

It was a September morning and Richmond was wrapped in stuffy, heat-charged humidity. Poe, clad in black, had climbed steep stairs to a gallery lit by a skylight and with little relief from the heat. Pratt used a brace to pose him and prevent movement of his head during the 15-minute process.

Poe left town without retrieving the Pratt pictures. Pratt displayed one of them in his shop window until leaving the business in 1856. Today, The Poe Museum displays an early copy of one. A handkerchief bulges under Poe's unbuttoned vest, perhaps attesting to wiping sweat and shoving hair from his broad brow.

Elmira Royster Shelton, Poe's childhood sweetheart with whom he sought to rekindle romance and potentially marry, had the presence of mind to allow a tintype copy to be made. The original was damaged during an 1894 cleaning attempt and then went missing. The copy was also thought to be lost until collector and Poe Museum friend Susan Jaffe Tane brought the tintype into the museum.

In celebrating Poe's 216th birthday, the museum also will be celebrating Richmond, where the poet spent an aggregate

of almost half his 40 years.

"Richmond is my home," Poe wrote in 1839 to his second cousin George W. Poe Jr., "and a letter to that City will always reach me, in whatever part of the world I maybe."

One can chart the author's development through city landmarks, some of which are still extant. His actress mother, Eliza, is buried at St. John's Church. A garden where as a youngster he played with his friend Charles Ellis became the Linden Row Inn's tranquil courtyard at 100 E. Franklin St. He dwelt as a ward of John and Frances Valentine Allan at Moldavia, a mansion on the southeast corner of Main and 5th streets, demolished in 1890. Shelton's home, where she lived when Poe met her again, still stands at 2407 E. Grace St.

He never lived at The Poe Museum's

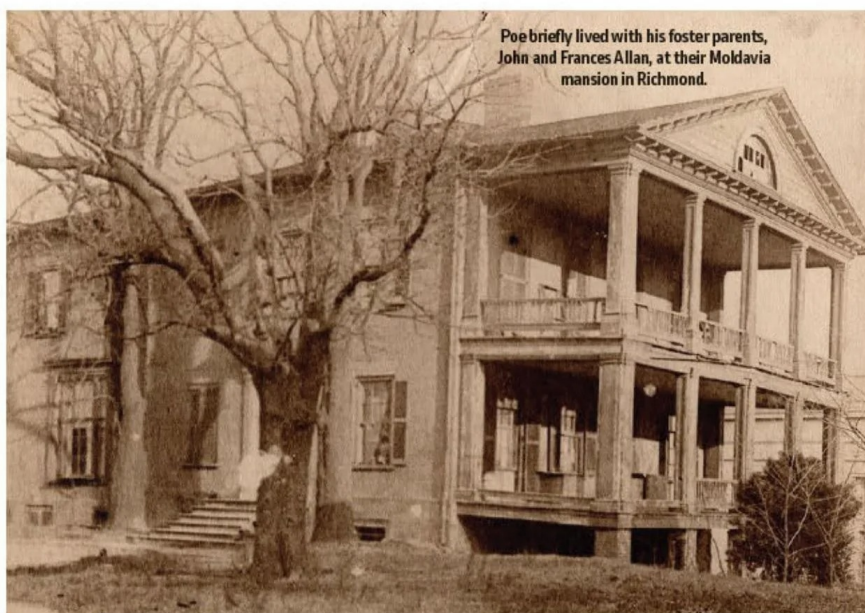
Old Stone House, but he marched in an honor guard during the 1824 visit there by the Marquis de Lafayette.

The Mackenzie family took in his baby sister, Rosalie, at their Duncan Lodge, which stood between what is now Lodge Street and Allen Avenue. Today, the site is occupied by a former Sears store that houses operations for Sauer's.

Poe became a professional writer at the Southern Literary Messenger, which stood on the southeast corner of 15th and Main streets. Following its razing, Remnants went into making the garden walls and pergola at the Poe Museum.

On Sept. 25, 1849, Poe went to a reception at Talavera, the country villa of grocer Thomas Talley. He recited "The Raven" for an enthralled audience. The listeners included Susan Archer Talley, a Poe fan-girl, who later observed that as Poe left the house, a shooting star streaked overhead. The residence has twice moved from its original site near Broad Street but still stands at 2315 W. Grace St.

You're likely to get a sense of Poe's presence at Talvera during the museum's "Sweet 216" event. And this spring, the museum is unveiling a reorganization of the exhibition spaces with a reunion of sorts for the furnishings, art and objects of the Poe, Allan and Mackenzie families that previously haven't been on view. Thus, Edgar's legacy continues, evermore. **■**



Poe briefly lived with his foster parents, John and Frances Allan, at their Moldavia mansion in Richmond.

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New plays, dance
performances and more
P. 34

CultureWorks revamps its
grants process for local arts
P. 38

Mackenzie Roark
and the Hotpants'
new album
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Jessica Bell Brown takes
the helm at the ICA
P. 42

Edited by NICOLE COHEN

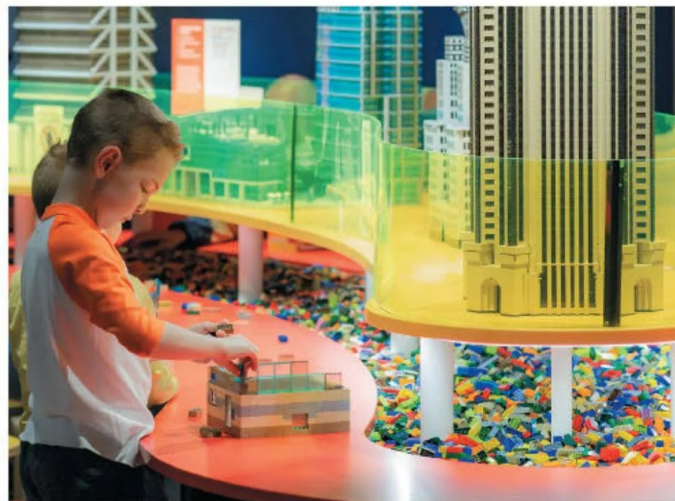
Datebook



DANCE

GLASS SLIPPERS

Enchanting waltzes, a lost slipper and a bit of magic — Richmond Ballet will perform the Virginia premiere of “Cinderella” at the Dominion Energy Center Feb. 14-16. The production is set to Sergei Prokofiev’s renowned score as brought to life by the Richmond Symphony. This timeless fairy tale features Ben Stevenson’s critically acclaimed choreography, which masterfully combines classical ballet with vivid storytelling. “This version of ‘Cinderella’ is known as one of the best productions in the ballet world market, so it’s such a great privilege for Richmond Ballet that Ben Stevenson is letting us perform his version of ‘Cinderella,’” says Richmond Ballet’s Artistic Director Ma Cong. Tickets start at \$25. richmondballet.com —*Jenna Lapp*



EXHIBITION

BUILD THE FUTURE

Iconic structures, like the Tokyo Skytree and Empire State Building, are coming to Richmond in the form of more than 500,000 Lego bricks, intricately built into replicas. The “Towers of Tomorrow with Lego Bricks” traveling exhibition stops at the Science Museum of Virginia, encouraging visitors to engage with engineering and architectural design in a way that “people know and love,” says Jennifer Guild, communications director for the museum. She says the SMV also opted to bring the Lego-based exhibition to RVA due to the museum’s extensive hands-on learning spaces. Visitors can refer to the models for inspiration as they use more than 200,000 loose Lego bricks to build their own “Towers of Tomorrow.” The exhibition opens Feb. 1 and continues through Aug. 25, and is included with museum admission (\$10 to \$17.50). smv.org —*Melody Yuan*

THEATER

HER WORDS

In a new adaptation of the 1955 Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett play, “The Diary of Anne Frank” comes to life on the Swift Creek Mill Theatre stage. The production follows young Anne Frank as she and her Jewish family attempt to evade Nazi persecution by hiding in a secret annex in Amsterdam during World War II. The theater is presenting the Wendy Kesselman adaptation, which closely mirrors the renowned diary Frank kept while sequestered from 1942 to 1944. Swift Creek Mill bills the performances as “heartwarming, honest and impassioned.” The show opens Jan. 25 and continues through Feb. 15. Tickets are \$49. swiftcreekmill.com —*Alyssa Hutton*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY TULSA BALLET; FLYING FISH; COURTESY ANNE FRANK HOUSE, AMSTERDAM



DANCE

LOVE MOTION

Dance company Bodytraffic is on a mission to spread the joy of movement to the masses. On Jan. 24 they'll bring their diverse styles to the University of Richmond's Modlin Center for the Arts. The group strives to educate audiences, encourage positive change and be a champion of contemporary dance. Dora Quintanilla, Bodytraffic's production and tour manager, says the program features a range of dance forms paired with compelling music. "Bodytraffic has toured the globe and across the U.S. embodying the spirit of our hometown of Los Angeles," Quintanilla says. "This is the company's first time returning to Richmond since 2013 [and] we are so looking forward to performing for the Richmond community." Audience members can also stick around for a post-show Q&A with the dancers. Tickets are \$10 to \$60. modlin.richmond.edu —AH

COMEDY

BEFORE MIDNIGHT

Comedian Taylor Tomlinson will explore subjects including her faith and sexuality during the "Save Me Tour," stopping at the Altria Theater for two performances Jan. 17-18. With a new Netflix special, "Have It All," currently streaming, Tomlinson can also be seen on weeknights hosting the aptly named CBS comedy show "After Midnight," now in its second season. At 31, she has been making a name for herself, landing on Variety's "10 Comics to Watch" list and their "Comedy Impact Report." Forbes also included her in their annual "30 Under 30" compilation and she made the TIME100 Next 2022, recognizing future leaders from around the globe. Tomlinson takes the Richmond stage at 7 p.m. on Jan. 17 and 8 p.m. on Jan. 18, and tickets start at \$53. altriatheater.com

—Nicole Cohen



SPECIAL EVENTS

HONORING HISTORY

In recognition of Black History Month, RVA offers educational opportunities and immersive experiences that share stories of local changemakers. Mark your calendars for this sampling of events.

JAN. 18

A session of their Health Equity Community Conversations series, the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia presents "Powerful Legacies: Racism, Inequality and Healthcare for African Americans." The discussion is led by Norfolk State University history professor Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander and explores the evolution of health care in the context of Black communities from slavery to today. The free program runs from 2 to 4 p.m. blackhistorymuseum.org

FEB. 7-8

Part of Richmond Triangle Players' Cabaret series, "Katrinah Carol Lewis: Becoming Me, Black and Free" is a musical journey into the life and times of the actress, singer and director. Lewis has two decades of professional theater experience under her belt and serves as the associate artistic director of the Firehouse Theatre, as well as the artistic director of Colonial Williamsburg's Museum Theater. The performances begin at 8 p.m. and tickets are \$45. rtriangle.org

FEB. 18

Henrico Recreation & Parks offers monthlong programming at locations around the county, including "Black Minds in STEM: Experiments of Black Scientists" which celebrates the legacies of African American inventors. Learn more about the people behind modern conveniences such as the traffic light, mobile refrigeration and even ice cream. The free program runs 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Taylor Farm Park. henrico.gov/rec

THROUGH SEPT. 1

The Valentine's exhibition "Edmund Archer: Perspectives on Black Dignity" features the works of the late artist and Richmonder. His portraits of Black men and women are a stark contrast from the stereotypical portrayals created by artists who preceded him and found within 20th century popular culture. The exhibition is included with museum admission (\$12, free entry on Thursdays). thevalentine.org

—Compiled by NC

THEATER

'ROCK WITH YOU'

Step into the King of Pop's world with "MJ: The Musical" as it makes its Richmond debut Jan. 28-Feb. 2 at the Altria Theater. Set during Michael Jackson's preparation for his Dangerous World Tour, this high-energy production offers a behind-the-scenes look at the singer's creative process while taking audiences on a journey through his entertainment career. Featuring an award-winning creative team, the show celebrates Jackson's talent and lasting impact on music and culture. "The energy level of this show is off the charts and people of all ages can barely sit in their seats," says Broadway in Richmond spokesperson Cindy Creasy. "When I left the theater, I felt like I had actually seen Michael Jackson in concert." Tickets start at \$49. altriatheater.com —JL



MUSIC

STILL BUZZING

For the Yellowjackets, the veteran Los Angeles-based jazz quartet playing The Tin Pan on Feb. 6, change is constant. Since the 1970s, keyboardist and founding member Russell Ferrante has surrounded himself with players committed to sonic exploration. The current lineup, with William Kennedy on drums, Bob Mintzer on saxophone and Dane Alderson on bass, has been in place since 2015,



but the Yellowjackets hasn't stopped shape-shifting. The 2018 album "Raising Our Voice," included vocals from Brazilian singer Luciana Souza, and in 2020, the group shared "Jackets XL," featuring orchestral accompaniment from Germany's WDR Big Band. "With each record, all four of us are on the hunt for new ways to put the notes together," Mintzer said when 2022 album "Parallel Motion" was released. The Tin Pan show starts at 8 p.m. and tickets are \$55. tinpanrva.com —Davy Jones

Happenings

MUSIC

1/18

The Richmond Symphony performs a "Celebration of Black Music in Film," featuring a journey through the musical heritage of Black cinema. The event begins at 8 p.m. at the Dominion Energy Center with a free pre-concert talk at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$10. dominionenergycenter.com



1/19

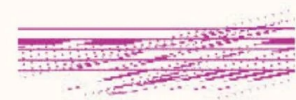
Atlanta rapper Destroy Lonely performs at The National at 7:30 p.m. \$45. thenationalva.com

1/26

Folk singer and songwriter Peter Mulvey takes The Tin Pan stage at 7 p.m. \$25. tinpanva.com

1/31

Pop vocalist Natalie Jane performs with singer-songwriter Chandler Leighton during her "Sick to my Stomach Tour," which stops at The Broadberry. The show begins at 8 p.m. and tickets start at \$25. thebroadberry.com



2/15

The Chamber Music Society of Central Virginia celebrates their 20th anniversary with a free concert featuring Edward Elgar's Serenade for Strings, Op. 20. The performance begins at 2 p.m. at the Richmond Public Library Main Branch. cmscva.org

2/20

Indie music group Lunar Vacation rocks at the Richmond Music Hall starting at 8 p.m. \$20. thebroadberry.com

STAGE

1/18

Firehouse Theatre brings playwrights and audiences together to workshop new plays during their First Drafts and Bagels series. The next work is Irene Ziegler's "Safety." The performance begins at noon. \$5. firehousetheatre.org

1/25-26

Richmond Triangle Players presents "O'Keeffe," a critically acclaimed drama about the complex life and career of the famous artist. Two performances begin at 8 p.m. on Saturday and 4 p.m. Sunday. \$45. rtriangle.org

THROUGH 1/26

Virginia Repertory Theatre presents Ken Ludwig's "Moriarty," following detective Sherlock Holmes and his sidekick Watson as they pursue Holmes' great nemesis Professor Moriarty. Tickets to the production at Hanover Tavern are \$54. va-rep.org

1/30-2/16

Richmond Shakespeare performs "The Father: A Tragic Farce" at Virginia Repertory Theatre's Theatre Gym. \$47. richmondshakespeare.org

2/28 AND 3/2

Virginia Opera puts on Mozart's "Così fan tutte," featuring dramatic loyalty tests during a comedic battle of the sexes, at the Dominion Energy Center for two performances: 7:30 p.m. on Friday and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets start at \$23. vaopera.org/cosi-fan-tutte



GALLERIES

1/3-31

Gallery5, in partnership with the Poe Museum, presents "A Midnight Dreary," featuring works inspired by Edgar Allan

Poe. The gallery will celebrate the poet, born on Jan. 19, 1809, with themed events throughout the month. gallery5arts.org

1/10-2/22

Linarejos Moreno's "On the Geography of Green" and group exhibition "XOXO" are displayed at Candela Gallery. candelagallery.com

1/17-3/2

Crossroads Art Center's juried January all-media show is all about "Love." This exhibition explores the connections and bonds of the emotion through paintings, sculpture, photography and mixed media. The gallery will host an opening reception on Jan. 17 from 5 to 8 p.m. crossroadsartcenter.com



EXHIBITIONS

2/1-22

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture celebrates Black History Month with its Black History Highlight Tour every Saturday in February at 11:30 a.m. The experience is included with museum admission (\$8 to \$12) and registration is required. virginiahistory.org

THROUGH 2/2

The Valentine presents "Turning Points: Richmond in the 1890s," exploring the turbulent post-Civil War decade when a new generation occupied the segregated local economic, municipal and cultural establishments. Included with museum admission (\$12, free on Thursdays). thevalentine.org

THROUGH 3/15

The Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia exhibition "A Prescription for Change" highlights the history and contributions of Black medical professionals, hospitals and organizations. Included with museum admission (\$6 to \$10). blackhistorymuseum.org

EVENTS

1/31-2/1

Hanover Tavern hosts ParaCon, featuring special guests and speakers, vendors, psychic mediums, eerie tales and tours of the historic site. All proceeds benefit the Hanover Tavern Foundation. The event runs 6 to 10 p.m. on Jan. 31 and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Feb. 1. General admission is \$12. hanovertavern.org

2/1

Based out of Richmond, Victims and Villains is a nonprofit dedicated to ending the stigma around mental health. They're hosting the Winter Horrorland Film Festival from noon to 5 p.m. at the Richmond Public Library Main Branch. The program is free, but registration is required. victimsandvillains.net

2/8

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts celebrates the Lunar New Year with ChinaFest: Year of the Wood Snake, featuring live performances, hands-on art activities and more. 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Free. vmfa.museum

2/9

Hardywood Park Craft Brewery's Ownby Lane location presents the fourth annual Galentine's Day Artisan Market, showcasing local women-owned businesses from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is free. hardywood.com

3/5-9

The 2025 Atlantic 10 Women's Basketball Championship will be hosted at the Henrico Sports & Events Center. An All-Session Pass is \$115. atlantic10.com

—Compiled by Gray Pershing

SPOTLIGHT

GRANTING ACCESS

CultureWorks serves as a catalyst for funding arts

By Paula Peters Chambers



Richmond nonprofit and arts promoter CultureWorks' new granting application process is speaking to the organization's mission of collaboration, accessibility and increased capacity as never before. By simplifying the initial paperwork required and adding a live and public forum where applicants pitch their projects, the nonprofit hopes to encourage requests and foster connections within the arts community.

"The level of information [an applicant] had to provide would have been appropriate for a grant of hundreds of thousands of dollars, not the few thousand dollars CW is able to offer," says Mary Burruss, CultureWorks' advancement and program specialist. "The previous application ate up time and resources, and time is valuable."

CultureWorks' 2025 grant cycle will begin next month when a letter of intent — with a mix of checkbox and short answer questions — goes live on the organization's website. Applicants have until Feb. 28 to submit. Within a month from the deadline, semifinalists will be invited to complete more detailed paperwork.



In 2024, CultureWorks awarded 22 regional organizations and artists with grants including the Latin Ballet of Virginia (pictured top left during the grants reception) and Barefoot Puppet Theater.

That pool will be further winnowed to finalists, who will advance to the presentation. There, each finalist will have two minutes to make their pitch before the panel of grant reviewers, followed by a three-minute Q&A.

Burruss says the audience for the final presentations will be open to potential funders, nonprofit organizations, artists, family and friends — and anyone who cares about local arts. "That way, everyone who applied for a grant can get something out of the process," she says. "There will be space to network with people who are funding similar

projects as well as other artists who may be interested in collaboration. Even if [an organization or artist] isn't getting a grant, it's an opportunity to connect or just see what proposals are successful."

In 2024, CultureWorks awarded more than \$131,000 in grants to 12 regional organizations and 10 artists; in 2023, grants totaled roughly \$110,000. "The amount of money we have to give out depends on the grant money we receive from our funders," Burruss says, noting that most funds come from corporate partners. Every other year, CultureWorks can apply for funding from the National Endowment for the Arts; 2024 was an NEA granting year.

CultureWorks gives grants in two divisions: organizations and individual practicing artists. Each division has a Building Capabilities category, which supports tangible improvements such as lighting, computer software and structural needs, and a Cultural Equity category, providing programming from, about or for historically underserved populations.

In 2024, one local gallery received funding to acquire a new software program for communication as well as staff training on the new system. Another 2024 grant went to Jackson Ward native and artist Sir James L. Thornhill for the creation of a mural at George W. Carver Elementary School to celebrate Engine Co. No. 9, home to the city's first professional Black firefighters.

"This is a BIPOC artist working with students from a primarily BIPOC school to share African American history of Richmond," Burruss says.

Burruss, who joined CultureWorks in March 2024, sees her role as one of support, not gatekeeping.

"CW recently partnered with ART 180 to offer a grant-writing class for artists," Burruss says, adding that potential grant applicants are welcome to make an appointment for a 30-minute conversation about CultureWorks' process.

"My door is open," she says. "I don't decide who is awarded grant money, so it is my goal to help everyone turn in the best application possible." ■



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PROFILE

HEART WITH ATTITUDE

Mackenzie Roark and the Hotpants are set to release a new album

By Adam Cheek

Familiar faces at Richmond's concert venues and beyond, Mackenzie Roark and the Hotpants have been making the music rounds for about two years. Now, they're set to release a currently untitled album in early 2025.

Roark, the band's guitarist and lead vocalist, has two solo efforts under her belt already. Her debut EP, "Mother Tongue," dropped in 2016, and her first full-length album, "Rollin' High, Feelin' Low," was released in 2022.

"My roots are classic rock," says Roark, who's been playing gigs in and around Richmond for about a decade. "That is what I truly grew up on, and that is the music that formed me as a human. ... This album is going to be a little more true to that, but still with that kind of like country undertone."

She says her early influences include Townes Van Zandt, John Prine and Emmylou Harris, among others. She

describes the upcoming album as Americana rock 'n' roll and an evolution from that previous sound.

The Hotpants began to take form after Roark released her 2022 album. In 2024, the band played the Friday Cheers concert series on Brown's Island in May and went on tour in September, tallying around 30 shows during the calendar year. Roark has also continued to play solo shows.

The band, whose name reflects Roark's affinity for 1970s fashion (and her self-professed goal to wear hotpants at most shows), has also played Richmond spots like Révéler, The Broadberry and Get Tight Lounge.

"I love the Richmond music scene," Roark says. "It's easy to feel a camaraderie with people."

For the new album, Roark says her band helped bring the songs to life, and she's taken on more of a producer role to achieve the overall vision. The group laid down all nine tracks at Red Amp

Audio in Richmond's historic Monroe Ward district.

"I'm like, 'Let's do something that's just f--king real,'" she says. The goal was to produce an album reflecting the group's concert sound.

"It's got some attitude," she adds. "It's definitely from the heart. All the songs are, I would say, very personal in a way, even the kind of lighthearted ones. They're all based on my life. It's got energy. It's got claws."

In 2024, the band won FloydFest's On-the-Rise competition; they will play the Floyd, Virginia-based festival again in July 2025.

"I made buttons," Roark says of the band's campaign to achieve the recognition, adding that they also handed out flyers. "[We] put them on the backs of every port-a-potty and put them around the whole festival. A ton of people showed up, and we won."

That grassroots campaign is part of Roark's larger boots-on-the-ground philosophy. She quit social media, instead self-promoting via a newsletter on her website and by simply playing gigs.

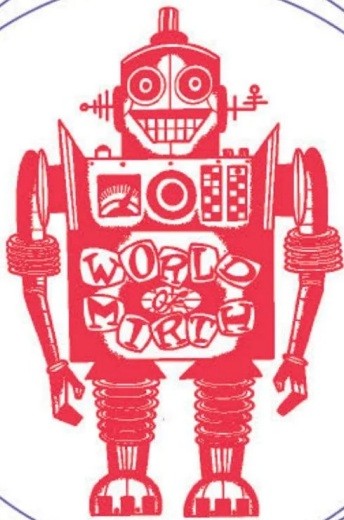
Catch Mackenzie Roark and the Hotpants at upcoming local shows, including Three Leg Run brewery in Chester on Jan. 10, Harry's at the Hof on Jan. 16, and Gallery5 in Jackson Ward with Richmond-based pop project The Wayward Leaves on Feb. 1. **R**

Mackenzie Roark is aiming for a late February or early March album release and subsequent launch party. For more information, visit mackenzieroark.com.

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PROFILE

'PROMOTE AND PROVOKE'

Jessica Bell Brown takes the reins of the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University

By Harry Kollatz Jr.

When chatting about the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, the new executive director, Jessica Bell Brown, uses the term "porosity." She explains, "It's to be porous, or open." Putting the term in context of the ICA, she says, "We're not a collecting institution, so we can take on more risk. That means we have more capacity to make new questions with artists, to promote and provoke."

That is, the character is not only commissioning work produced on site (49 works original to residencies at the ICA) or exhibiting the results, but the conversation and engagement of those who visit the museum.

For her, the ICA is a community center participating in the arts and cultural fabric of the region with connections and relationships that span across the country and the world.

"Museums and public institutions are more and more important gathering places for the exchange of art and ideas," she observes, "and we are operating in alignment with what the current moment demands."

Brown, who joined the ICA in late October 2024, says her vision for the museum is to make it a place for all with something for everyone, including programming, dialogues and the building

itself. "All of this is to hold people's attention and promote new sorts of ways of questioning our world, new ways of being in community, and really asking questions of each other on a deeper level," she says.

The Princeton and Northwestern university graduate comes to the ICA from the Baltimore Museum of Art, where she curated and administered its contemporary art department. In 2017, during a Mellon Museum Research Consortium fellowship at the Museum of Modern Art, she worked on the exhibition "Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends." In 2020, she received an Andy Warhol Foundation Curatorial Research Fellowship and joined the 2023 class of the Villa Albertine's Museums Next Generation program.

Brown is also no stranger to Richmond. While living in Baltimore, one of her first regional visits brought her to the ICA. She was impressed by the Steven Holl-designed building and the exhibitions in the galleries, including Guadalupe Maravilla's "Provocations," which featured the Salvadoran immigrant artist's totemic

Jessica Bell Brown assumed her new role as executive director of the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University in late October 2024.

sculptures of steel, gongs and objects found on the U.S. and Mexico border.

"It blew my mind," Brown says. "And after that, I started coming to Richmond as a visitor with my family and for long weekends. I never thought in a million years that I'd be living and working in Richmond. It's sort of amazing to me, coming full circle, like maybe we were manifesting this without knowing."

Brown has enjoyed learning the city's textures and folds, the histories visible and beneath the surface. During her first weekend here as a resident, she visited the Cedar Street Baptist Church of God, one of the city's oldest Black congregations, and the baptistry addition designed by the city's second-licensed Black contractor, Ethel Bailey Carter Furman. She notes that Church Hill's history extends beyond Patrick Henry and St. John's Church. "But there's so many other amazing stories to tell, especially when you think about Black cultural and spiritual life in Richmond," Brown says. "I'm really thrilled to have the ICA be a part of this conversation." ■



2025 RICHMOND FIVE STAR AWARD WINNERS

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Five Star Professional partnered with Richmond magazine to identify real estate, mortgage and insurance professionals in the Richmond area who deliver outstanding service and client satisfaction. The Five Star

Professional research team surveyed homebuyers, home sellers and industry peers, and analyzed online consumer evaluations. Survey respondents rated their service professional on criteria such as overall satisfaction and whether they would recommend the provider to a friend. The research methodology allows no more than 7% of professionals in each category to receive the award.

RESEARCH — HOW OUR WINNERS ARE CHOSEN

- The 2025 Five Star Real Estate Agents, Mortgage Professionals and Home/Auto Insurance Professionals do not pay a fee to be included in the research or the final lists.
- Each professional is screened against state governing bodies to verify that licenses are current and no disciplinary actions are pending.
- The inclusion of a real estate agent, mortgage professional or insurance professional on the final list should not be construed as an endorsement by Five Star Professional or Richmond magazine.

DETERMINATION OF AWARD WINNERS

Professionals who satisfied each of the following objective criteria were named a 2025 Richmond-area Five Star Real Estate Agent, Five Star Mortgage Professional or Five Star Home/Auto Insurance Professional:

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Eligibility Criteria:

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4. Satisfies minimum production on a one-year and three-year basis.

5. Successful completion of a Blue Ribbon Panel review.

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The final list of 2025 Richmond-area Five Star award winners is a select group, representing approximately 1% of real estate agents, 1% of mortgage professionals and 1% of home/auto insurance professionals in the area. To see the full list of winners, visit www.fivestarprofessional.com.

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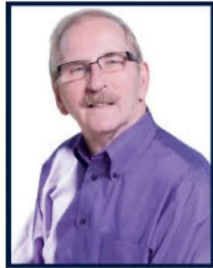
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A new line of
adaptive wear
hits stores
P. 48

Upgrade your
snapshots with film
photography
P. 50

Regional vets
take on the Golden
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Find your
friends in
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New year, new
me-time for
parents
P. 56

Edited by KEVIN JOHNSON

STYLE

A Perfect Fit

A Richmond-based adaptive apparel brand expands its offerings

By Joyelle Ronan

For people with disabilities, functional fashion can feel like a myth. Nationwide stores and boutiques alike have traditionally lacked accessible options tailored to all ability levels. That's where Richmond-based adaptive clothing brand No Limbits found its niche, and the company recently took major strides to expand its offerings into the largest retailers in the country.

Founder and CEO Erica Cole didn't intend to become an entrepreneur; she was studying to be a chemist at the University of Iowa when she lost her leg in a car accident in 2018. Her background in costume sewing came in handy to alter her own clothing to better suit her prosthetic. "I started by word of mouth, doing alterations for wheelchair users and other folks that needed some adaptive changes to their clothing," Cole says.

After launching a successful Kickstarter campaign, Cole went on the television series "Shark Tank" in 2022 and made a deal with investors Emma Grede and Mark Cuban for \$100,000 for 10% equity in the brand. Cole then participated in Lighthouse Labs, a local startup accelerator, and decided to establish No Limbits in Richmond. "There's a really interesting, self-driven founder community here," Cole says.

No Limbits' most recent line, launched September 2024, is for adults and children with sensory processing disorders and sensory sensitivities. Sensory-friendly brands are rare, and it can be even more challenging to find this variety of clothing for adults, especially in a wider range of styles and sizes. The shirts, tank tops and hoodies in the collection are made of soft, cooling fabric with no tags and flat seams. Inside the sweatshirt's front pouch is a



textured swirling pattern that the wearer can trace as a fidget tool.

"It takes us a year and a half to develop a new product or category on average," Cole says. "That's way longer than the traditional fashion industry, just because a lot of stuff hasn't really been done before."

The brand partnered with Walmart to stock and sell these all-ages products online, a connection that brings the locally designed clothing to a national audience. Cole further expanded the brand's reach with an appearance on QVC this fall to debut No Limbits' magnetic zip front jacket, an adaptive design meant to aid wearers with limited hand mobility. Certain prints and colors of the jacket can only be purchased through the shopping television network.

The show's format allowed her not only to showcase her products, but to also explain the unique features of adaptive clothing. "There's a consumer education piece that has to happen," Cole says. "People with disabilities aren't used to being able to have options."

For Cole and her brand, this is just the beginning. "We're on the cusp of mainstream brands adopting adaptive fashion," she says. Some of these brands have done a one-time-only adaptive clothing launch, but accessibility is more than a trend for No Limbits. "We are proving that this space exists in the apparel category. That's a huge part of how we see our role as a company." ■

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SHOOT YOUR SHOT

Film photography's niche attraction keeps Richmonders snapping

By Rachel Kester

Capturing the world through the lens of a camera has become even more convenient and accessible today thanks to rapidly advancing technology. But in the era of cell phone cameras, a special intimacy in photos has vanished — an absence that has led to a reverence for and resurgence in film photography.

With cozier hues, personalized touches and sometimes slight imperfections, film has attracted many people who prefer the way it nostalgically preserves life's moments. Local wedding photographer Aly Hansen is one of them.

Hansen added film to her repertoire in 2022 after feeling creatively burnt out in her business. "I picked up a film camera expecting to maybe shoot a roll or two but ended up falling in love with the process and spent the summer developing all my client rolls in my bathroom," she says.

To capture couples' celebrations, Hansen relies mainly on a Yashica twin lens, a Canon 1V and a vintage SX-70 Polaroid, each of which has its own aesthetic impact on the end product.

"I think most people are drawn to film because of how it slows them down. For

me, personally, I am drawn to the way it can't be replicated. Not only are no two film frames the same, but digital simply cannot replicate the look of film," Hansen says. "You can add grain to a digital camera photo, but you can't add the depth film gives you — the way light and color translates. Digital just doesn't compare."

Derek Keaton is another film enthusiast whose journey with the art form goes back to his youth. As a kid in Richmond, Keaton often used film cameras to shoot skateboarding photos.

"That was all we had," he says. "Digital was still pretty new, and trying to afford one of those cameras was out of the question."

Keaton originally set out to be a painter but ended up trading pigments for light. About seven years ago, he started shooting film more professionally and has since immortalized everything from haunting Richmond riverscapes to whimsical portraits, often with 4x5- or 8x10-inch-view large-format cameras.

There are several opportunities throughout the community to explore this newly niche art, including at the

Visual Arts Center of Richmond. Home to the largest publicly accessible darkroom in Virginia, the center features 10 enlargers that primarily support black-and-white film processing, although alternative developers — like those for color film — are available on occasion.

VisArts also offers a range of classes in film photography, including multi-week courses and weekend workshops; each seasonal semester has something that caters to all film photography skill levels.

Another place to learn is the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, which often hosts black-and-white film photography darkroom courses at their Studio School facility. Two courses are scheduled for the first part of 2025, with an introductory session to teach the basics and another session designed for more experienced photographers seeking to perfect their skills. Students must supply their own camera equipment, but all darkroom chemicals are provided.

"We get so drawn into the digital world and instant gratification," Keaton says. "People want to step away from that and try something different." ■





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ENCORE

Healthy Competition

Locals show up and show off at the National Veterans Golden Age Games

By D. Hunter Reardon



Veterans in competition at the 2024 Golden Age Games in Utah

Though the 58-year-old Mike Tyson lost his professional comeback fight in November against the 27-year-old Jake Paul, he showed that the desire to compete doesn't fade with age.

The Golden Age Games — put on by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and most recently held in Salt Lake City, in August — offers a place for those over the age of 55 who love the thrill of competition. Unlike Tyson, athletes at the Golden Age Games compete with others at their age and ability level; there are eight age divisions and three ability divisions (ambulatory, visually impaired and wheelchair).

The athletes also share a fraternity: They must all be Armed Forces veterans.

"The National Veterans Golden Age Games was established in 1985 with over 100 veteran athletes traveling to partici-

pate," says Brittany Hook, the event's director. "We are expecting to see about 1,000 veteran athletes in 2025." Last year, there were 19 different sports to compete in, including pickleball, track, basketball, bowling and more.

"This year, we had our most competitors ever and had representation from 47 states plus Washington, D.C.," Hook adds.

The commonwealth of Virginia took home 30 gold medals in the competition. Assisting in that effort were Cleveland Dixon, 83, and Matthew Reed, 60, two Army veterans who traveled to Salt Lake City and are planning to travel to Memphis for the 2025 event this May.

"When I started losing my vision, I came to the VA in 2015. I was looking for something to do outside of work," says Reed, who lives in Chester. That's how he came to compete in the visually impaired division for sports like bowling and disc golf.

"For the past six years, I had thought about the Golden Age Games, but I didn't participate — I was a little tentative about leaving the house and being away from Richmond," Reed says. "Now that I did it, I'm going every year, because it was awesome."

Dixon, who lives in Prince George, also heard about the Golden Age Games by word-of-mouth. "I was talking to one of my colleagues in the VA, and he said, 'Man, we do things over there, we don't just sit around and flip the TV switch,'" Dixon says. "I came in two years ago, and it's one of the best things I've ever done."

Richmond-area adaptive sports coach Nicole Shuman says she sees the games benefit the lives of competitors in many ways.

"It increases your ability to socialize and to meet other veterans who may be experiencing the same things you are," Shuman says. "Even as you're playing the games and practicing, you might learn something ... there's a lot of conversation and therapy that happens within the group."

"Our motto is 'Fitness for life,'" Hook says. "We really encourage our veterans to be active, to be healthy, to include sports into their rehabilitation plan, and live long, happy, healthy lives."

Dixon says that, going into May, he just has one goal in mind. At 83, he's the oldest member of the local team and one of the oldest athletes at the games. He will be competing in bowling, billiards, shuffleboard and air rifle like he did in 2024.

"I just want to win," Dixon says. "I have to compete to win, because I'm one of the older guys here, and I can't let the younger guys walk over me if I can help it." **13**



Winners in the 65-89 age division in golf



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TRAVEL

LET'S BE FRIENDS

Harrisonburg welcomes all comers with impressive amenities

By Kevin Johnson

Since its earliest days as a thoroughfare for Native American tribes, through the country's founding and expansion, and into the modern era of Interstate 81, the Shenandoah Valley has offered travelers a great green respite from the surrounding topography. But Harrisonburg, the valley's largest city, sandwiched between the Allegheny and Blue Ridge mountains, has established itself as much more than a break in the hills.

Thanks in part to the explosive growth of James Madison University, Harrisonburg's population increase has outpaced similar cities, like Charlottesville and Winchester, since 2000. Newcomers have brought with them diverse businesses and a strong youth

culture that helped form the city's regionally recognized arts, shopping and dining scenes. No matter your niche, a visit proves that Harrisonburg lives up to its nickname of the "Friendly City."

START DOWNTOWN

Harrisonburg's walkable downtown district is dotted with stores, restaurants and historical structures; make the most of the area while leaning into its history with a stay at the **Friendly City Inn**, a bed and breakfast at a restored Civil War-era home. On the southern edge of the city center, adjacent to James Madison University, the **Hotel Madison** is a sizable option with luxe offerings that include multiple food options, live music and a pool on the ground floor. If the surrounding scenery is

more your speed, venture past downtown to the numerous cabins, campgrounds and short-term vacation rentals in the valley close to outdoor activities.

Plug in to downtown's cultural scene with one of the town's (many) annual festivals — highlights include **MACROCK**, a decades-old music festival held across venues in April; **Skeleton Festival**, a Halloween-and Day of the Dead-themed fair supporting local businesses at the end of October; and **Harrisonburg Restaurant Month**, a chance to sample the best of downtown throughout the month of March. Spots like the **Shops at Agora**, a retail hub for makers and vintage offerings, and restaurant-venue hybrids like **Clementine Cafe** and the **Golden Pony** connect travelers to the city's unique vibe any time of year.

HIT THE TRAILS

Harrisonburg's connection to the outdoors is no secret. There are few other cities in Virginia where visitors can hike, mountain bike, climb, ski and snowboard not just in one calendar year but in one day without driving more than a few dozen miles. The nearby **Massanutten Resort** is well-loved for skiing, snowboarding, and tubing in the colder months and big for biking, golf, family activities, and more in the summers. If you're looking for something wilder, find activities for all abilities in **Shenandoah National Park** to the east and the **George Washington National Forest** to the west.

Of special note is the town's reputation as a mountain biking hub. Harrisonburg has earned Bronze Level Ride Center status from the International Mountain Bike Association due to an abundance of trails, events and passionate locals. Retailers such as the **Shenandoah Bicycle Company** and **Rocktown Bicycles** offer rentals and point visitors to quality spots nearby, including the city-owned **Hillandale Park** west of downtown.

EAT UP

Harrisonburg's food scene has punched well above its weight considering its college town reputation, no doubt bolstered by the plethora of fine farms in close proximity. As the first Culinary District in the commonwealth (established by Harrisonburg's City Council in 2014), downtown is the heart of the city's food scene.

A staple spot is **Kline's Dairy Bar**, known for offering unique weekly ice cream flavors that differ between its downtown and Main Street locations. Other restaurants around town might look familiar to Richmonders, such as **Capital Ale House** and the original **Jack Brown's Burger and Beer Joint**.



Popular newer spots include **Magpie Diner**, complete with breakfast and lunch options, and food truck-turned-sit-down Korean restaurant **Mashita**.

Get up close with the region's agricultural offerings at the **Friendly City Food Co-op**, a community-owned grocery located downtown on Mason Street. The shop stocks produce from local farms and incorporates them into its café and hot bar and holds events with regional makers and growers throughout the year. **18**



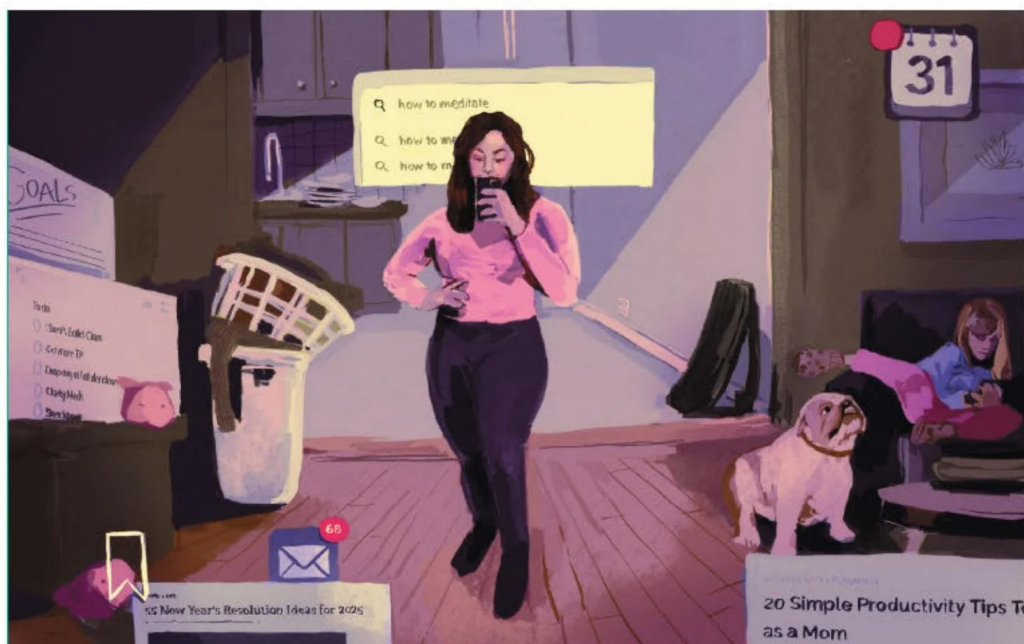
SAVE THE DATES

As the temperatures reach new lows and the calendar turns over, the Harrisonburg Farmers Market remains open with its **Winter Market**, held downtown on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., January through March.

The **Rocktown Roller-rama**, put on by Rocktown Bicycles, features head-to-head stationary cycling sprint races for riders to test their speed. The event will be held Jan. 24 at the Three Notch'd Valley Collab House; registration is required in advance.



Downtown
Harrisonburg



FAMILY

A Resolution Revolution

Here's to throwing out grandiose goals and doing less this year

By Laura Anders Lee

Every January since I was young, I've made New Year's resolutions, and most every year I've come up short on following through. I've yet to write that book, hit 500 rides on my Peloton or learn to fluently speak Spanish. Instead of feeling proud of what I actually have accomplished, I'm often disappointed in myself for what I haven't done. So this year, instead of adding more to my to-do list, I'm giving myself permission to do less.

I'm among a generation of over-achieving parents, and there's no rest for the weary. Xennials — the portmanteau encompassing Gen Xers and Millennials — have adopted an intensive style of child-rearing. We're coaching Little League, leading PTA committees, teaching Sunday school and carpooling across town to multiple activities, all while managing jobs, households and aging parents. We're spending more time, energy and money on our kids than any generation before us, and we're running on empty.

"Parents are definitely feeling more stress," says Lexie Gerczak, a mother of

two boys and a licensed clinical social worker at Bon Air Counseling. "There are so many more opportunities for our kids, and we want to give them everything that we possibly can. The competition starts younger and younger with sports, academics, dance and everything else."

The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, the same department that has warned us about the dangers of cigarettes and alcohol, has issued an advisory on the well-being and mental health of parents. U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy's research shows that parents' levels of stress have increased over the last decade, to the detriment of their health. Half of all parents with children 18 and under reported that most days, their stress is completely overwhelming.

With jam-packed schedules fueled by a culture of always doing more, something's got to give. We can't let that be our mental health. If there has ever been a time to do less, it's now.

Gerczak recommends that, instead of setting a New Year's resolution this year, which is often a solitary act, lay out your priorities as a family and remember

what's important in the big picture.

"You want to set yourself and your family up for success and see what's actually doable in your life," she says. "It's easy to get wrapped up in trying to take every opportunity there is, but it's important to have a balance."

Saying "no" can be really hard, especially for a people-pleaser like me, but Gerczak says it's critical in avoiding burnout and resentment.

"Set boundaries for your kids as well as yourself," she says. "You don't want to hurt anyone's feelings or feel like you're letting someone down, but remember when people tell you no, you're able to move on by problem solving and finding other resources, and they will, too."

Jan. 1 is just another day on the calendar, but for me it's also the symbol of a fresh start, the chance to be a bit better. Better doesn't mean taking on more, though. Before I add something to my agenda, I should ask myself questions like, "Is this worth my time?" And while I have my planner open, I'm going to pencil in time for myself — or maybe I'll use a permanent marker. **R**



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THE TALE OF THE



COMEBACK KID

After decades of decline, Petersburg is now a rising star of the region

By Ian M. Stewart

After a half-century of being ignored and left for ruin, Hotel Petersburg has been resurrected as a boutique hotel. The nearly seven-year-long project required gutting the interior, redesigning basic functions and applying a meticulous eye to the smallest details, all while securing funds, getting permit approvals, and communicating and consulting with city officials. The hotel opened Dec. 5, but — as with any large production — only time will tell if the effort pays off.

The story of Hotel Petersburg is like the city itself. After decades of decline, of crumbling buildings and bad statistics, Petersburg is on the road to a comeback.

"We have some beautiful, educated, intellectual people

here in Petersburg, and we're not always displayed that way," says James C. Davenport, who was peering over fruit stands on a crisp Saturday morning at River Street Market in the city's historic downtown.

Davenport is nearly a native at this point. He served as president of the Historic Petersburg Foundation in 1986. He also served as the head of the physics department at Virginia State University for 30 years.

"I live up on High Street ... in the historic district. I came here to work at Virginia State University in the mid-'70s," he says. "And when I came here, I liked what I saw. It was booming, and I don't like the way people have depicted it [since then]."



Left to right: Dr. Nathaniel Cuthbert, owner of Hotel Petersburg, and Paul Cooper, CEO of Retro Hotels, which manages the property; (top right) The new lobby dresses historic architecture in modern design. (bottom right) The hotel originally opened on West Tabb Street in 1916.

'A BAD RAP'

Twenty miles south of Richmond, the city of Petersburg is bordered by the Appomattox River and the junctions of interstates 85 and 95; both the Norfolk Southern and the CSX railroads run past as well. Virginia State University and Fort Gregg-Adams, formerly known as Fort Lee, are close by.

The city is rich in history. Originally occupied by the Appamattuck tribe, Petersburg was settled by English colonists in 1635 and incorporated in 1748. It was the site of the Battle of Petersburg during the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Men and Boys and the Siege of Petersburg during the Civil War, and the 1960 library sit-in led by groups of students during the Civil Rights Movement, among many other events, and it boasts numerous state and national historic districts.

More than 33,000 people call Petersburg home, with the majority identifying

as Black or African American, according to the most recent United States Census. Income levels of the residents are lower than the rest of the commonwealth: While Virginia's median income level is \$89,931, Petersburg's comes in at \$46,930.

The city has a higher crime rate than the rest of Virginia, according to statistics from the FBI, although that has improved over the past five years. Petersburg was recently ranked as one the least healthy cities in the state and nation, according to the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. It's also a food desert, meaning there's no major grocery store — another stat that's about to change.

But those figures are just one side of the story of Petersburg.

"Petersburg gets a bad rap. People think or hear it's synonymous with crime or whatever," developer Dave McCormack says. "Every city has these issues. But in

my experience, none of that is true. It's a beautiful, amazing place to be. I haven't had an issue down here literally in the 25 years I've been here. Nothing."

AN ARCHITECTURAL GEM

Petersburg is rife with eye-catching architecture, which is what prompted the artist David LeRoy Ross to move south from Richmond. "I think the architecture here in Petersburg is just to die for. It's so quaint and some of it's so old," he says. LeRoy Ross moved into an area that was once dotted with industrial warehouses but is now home to lofts, coffeehouses and a brewery.

LeRoy Ross says affordability and accessibility — such as a space where he can both live and do his metal artwork — led him to make the move. "I was looking all around in Richmond, and I just couldn't find what I wanted because I wanted something where



I could habitate as well," he says.

Architecture also inspired Dr. Nathaniel Cuthbert to buy Hotel Petersburg. "There's this fabulous wealth of architecture spanning centuries. And if you take the time to look at it, I think you'll find a lot that is appealing. It has a real sense of presence," Cuthbert says. "I always liked the building. It's my favorite period of commercial building, the first quarter of the 20th century."

First opened in 1904 as the 30-room Shirley Hotel in the city's Courthouse District, which is recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, the building then morphed into a six-story, 125-room hotel. It had a grand reopening in 1916 and took the name Hotel Petersburg.

Over the decades, the hotel hosted dances and parties for Shriners and traveling businessmen, and it had its share of crime — most notably, a narcotics bust

in 1916 and some robberies in the 1960s. All these are laid out with photos of newspaper clippings on the hotel's website.

A series of fires in the late 1960s and early '70s eventually caused the building to close. The city purchased it in 1975 with the intention of building a new city hall, but that never happened, and the building sat dormant until Cuthbert bought it in 2017.

"I've always thought it was handsome, and it got to the point where I thought it was crying out to have something done with it," Cuthbert says. "It just took me a while to hear those cries and to understand what they were."

Cuthbert first thought the building would be ideal for apartments. "That would have been far, far easier than a boutique hotel," he says, "but the city didn't really want to go in that direction, and the mayor convinced me that a hotel would be a good use." Cuthbert — whose brother Charlie

represents the City Council's 4th Ward across the street from the site — thought about it, did some market surveys and realized the property could be more than just a hotel.

"This is something that I've worked on for five years, to get a boutique hotel here in the city of Petersburg," Mayor Samuel Parham says. "It took over \$23 million to get that old Petersburg hotel renovated and back open, so it's something that's long overdue. I'm looking forward to it being a huge hit here in Petersburg."

Even before its grand opening, the hotel was booking and holding events, Cuthbert says, citing meetings and dinners for pharmaceutical companies. "It's very gratifying that there has been a lot of interest. I've got a stack of business cards this thick," he says, gesturing with his fingers. "I've got to reach out to everybody and make lots of calls."

GAME CHANGERS

The hotel reopening coincides with growth in the area due to new businesses and developments and, even more importantly, a surge in manufacturing jobs thanks to the pharmaceutical industry.

Petersburg was a hub of manufacturing jobs, most notably in tobacco plants, until one major company left in 1986, says Keith Boswell, president of Virginia's Gateway Region, an economic development organization that has been helping businesses locate to the Tri-Cities area since the 1960s. "Brown & Williamson [Tobacco Corporation] was the big dog in this area," he says. "They made an ultimatum to the city [demanding permission to expand]. The city said, 'Well, we don't think you're leaving.' And they left. They went to Macon, Georgia, and set up a brand-new operation down there. They totally devastated this city."

According to research by former Progress-Index reporter Sarah Vogelsong, Brown & Williamson had begun building the Georgia plant during the 1970s to allow for growth and later decided due to economic factors to combine operations in its newest facility. However the events are interpreted, the company employed as many as 4,000 workers in Petersburg, and its departure helped speed up an economic downturn, according to the Historic Petersburg Foundation, a preservation organization.

Fast-forward to the growth of the pharmaceutical industry.

"It started mainly because the federal government put up some serious money into getting API made back into the United States," Boswell explains, referring to active pharmaceutical ingredients, the biologically active component of drug products that produces the intended effects. "There are three companies in Petersburg right now making product," including insulin, he says.

The federal grants incentivized companies to manufacture in the United States, and Petersburg's designation as a Tech Hub by the federal Economic >

Development Administration encouraged them to choose the region. Plus, Boswell says, Petersburg has a lot of land for companies to build on.

"Petersburg has always been in [the business of] making things and moving things," Boswell says. "So we make things, we have manufacturing, and we also move things because we're at the confluence of so many natural transportation corridors."

Due to the growth of the pharmaceutical industry, he adds, state and local money have been leveraged to upgrade the water and wastewater infrastructure "that has been sorely needed ... so that we can handle the expansions and big-volume users. So that's been a real game changer."

Another game changer, both for residents and the city's image, was the 2022 demolition of the old Ramada Inn just off I-95. "It came to the point where it wasn't going to be restored and it needed to be taken down," Boswell says. "That was a huge mental win and a huge physical win for us as a community, because every day you went by that hotel and it said, 'Don't stop here, things are broken here.' And so, by tearing it down, it actually has changed the mood and the vibe around here."

Boswell says Hotel Petersburg may help the city follow the pattern of other small Virginia cities that have succeeded after a downturn. "One of [their commonalities] is that they're on a river. So if you can figure out how to access the river, that promotes a quality of life [because] everybody likes water," Boswell says. "The second is a boutique hotel. If you think about the recovery of Farmville and Danville and Staunton and Harrisonburg, they all recovered around a boutique hotel."

PARTNERSHIP FOR PETERSBURG

Part of the vibe change and the growth of businesses in the city can also be attributed to Gov. Glenn Youngkin's Partnership for Petersburg. Launched in 2022, the initiative seeks to apply what

the governor called a "holistic approach" to help reinvigorate the city.

The program encompasses schools, health care, crime reduction, enticing companies to open businesses and more. It seeks to bring state, local and community leaders together to help the city, as well as to attract a variety of grants and private funds.

The program has generated an influx of about \$81 million so far, according to the governor's press secretary. That figure does not include a private commitment of \$100 million for Sycamore Grove, a new mixed-use development that will feature a Grant's Supermarket, the city's first full-line grocery store, nor does it include a \$17 million private commitment for Hotel Petersburg.

"I've never seen a governor try to do as much to help Petersburg help itself as this administration has," says Hotel Petersburg's Cuthbert. "We were very fortunate to be allowed to participate in their tourism gap financing program, which is kind of a hybrid grant and loan combined."

Cuthbert says the economic development that's happening all around the city will also help grow the tax base. "And if we have a bigger tax base, then

there's more money for the city to spend on education and all the functions of government," he says. "It all adds up. You have more jobs and more people there to spend money. There's a multiplier effect."

GAMBLING ON TOURISM

Another new business is expected to start construction this year and open in 2026. In November, almost 82% of Petersburg voters approved a new casino to be built in the city.

"It's going to be a game changer for the city of Petersburg," Mayor Parham says. "It is the largest economic development project to ever come through the city: \$1.4 billion."

Parham says the development will bring jobs to the city, and more importantly, the tax revenue will jumpstart many long-overdue projects. "We are an older city, so we have a tremendous amount of infrastructure needs," Parham says. "Along with replacing water and sewer lines and improving our overall infrastructure, we haven't built a school here in over 50 years, so we're looking at building new schools." The extra revenue may also finance a new courthouse as well as new police and fire stations and enable the city to pay better wages for



BELOW: COURTESY JOANNE WILLIAMS / CITY OF PETERSBURG TOURISM



[From left] River Street Market in Old Towne Petersburg is open Saturdays year-round. Trapezium Brewing Co. on North Third Street has served suds and pizza since 2016.

teachers, firefighters and police officers, Parham adds.

City officials are hoping that the new casino will boost tourism as well, although Petersburg already sees numerous tourists thanks to its Revolutionary and Civil War history, says Joanne Williams, the city's director of communications, tourism, marketing and government relations.

"Petersburg was the site of the largest, longest siege on American soil, 9 1/2 months of the Civil War. If Petersburg had not fallen, Richmond would not have gone down, so we consider that the

Civil War ended here," Williams says. "We also have great African American history here, and that story is being told. We have a nonprofit that is working to restore the old McKinney Library into an African American history museum."

But the key to spreading the wealth is getting gamblers into the historic downtown. "We are talking with the casino about having a small visitor center right in the entranceway so that people will know what else there is to do in the city," Williams says, "and also the possibility of having one of our trolleys run daily [and] take people back and forth from the casino to downtown."

In addition, the new Fall Line Trail, a 43-mile multiuse path between Petersburg and the town of Ashland, will bring more visitors to the city, Williams says. "Lots of things are happening in Petersburg. This is a turning point for Petersburg."

Cuthbert agrees that more visitors will help the city overall, and he hopes that they'll stay in his hotel — the only one in the city. "I think any city needs a nice place for people to stay. You don't want people just to come in and do their business and turn around and go back," he says. "You want them to stay here a little bit and learn what's attractive about the city and perhaps help some of the shops and restaurants and bars and things in the neighborhood."

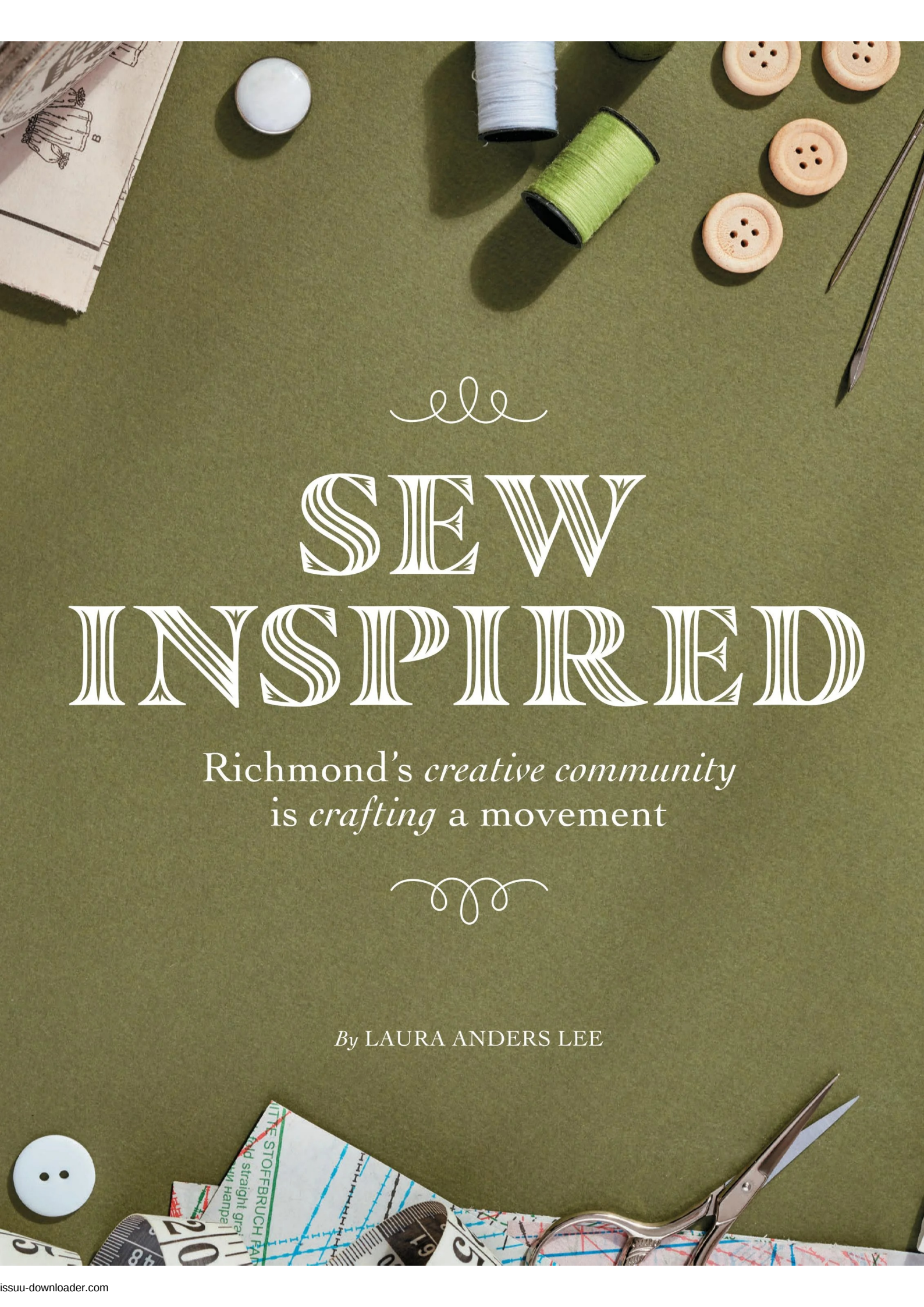
'CHANGING FOR THE BETTER'

As Williams noted, Petersburg is at a turning point. The people moving the city forward are gambling that their efforts to attract businesses, residents and investment to the area will push Petersburg past the negative stereotypes.

McCormack calls the transformation a rebranding. The developer's fingerprints can be found on multiple buildings in the downtown area dating back to 2003, when he bought a dilapidated warehouse and turned it into market-rate apartments. He also owns Trapezium Brewing Co., Demolition Coffee, and other businesses and buildings in the area. "The brand of Petersburg will start to change, and it'll stop being that narrative about all the bad things happening," he says. "Honestly, right now, I feel like we're probably in the best place we've ever been."

Back at River Street Market, James C. Davenport says developments like the new Hotel Petersburg are a positive sign that things are changing for the better in the city. "The hotel is a beautiful success indicator, and it is catering to ... people that I hope will come to Petersburg and make Petersburg their home," he says. "We have gone through a lot of things that other cities [have] recently gone through. We should be a champion on telling people how to survive with very little. Because we did it." **R**





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SEW INSPIRED

Richmond's *creative community*
is *crafting* a movement

By LAURA ANDERS LEE



Visit Karen Keech Swerling's home on a Saturday, and you might find a newlywed, a school bus driver, a medical school student, a competitive roller skater and a few grandmothers in her basement. As different as they may seem, they're all bound by a common thread: They are members of Richmond Really Sews and part of a national resurgence of sewing.

Looking for friendships and a creative outlet during the coronavirus pandemic, Swerling converted the basement of her 100-year-old home in the Fan into a sewing center. Each Saturday she provides open hours and free lessons to anyone with a passion for sewing or a desire to learn.

"You can just feel the energy down here," she says. "People chat while they're sewing and become friends — I love it. We have men and women; young and old; members who are gay and transgender; Black, white and Latina; and people of different socioeconomic backgrounds. It's about friendships first."

A small but mighty redhead, Swerling radiates warmth and energy, and has a resume as impressive as her enthusiasm is infectious. After watching the musical "Bye Bye Birdie" at age 13, Swerling told her mother she would go into show business one day; she grew up to have a decades-long career as a Hollywood costume designer. One of her first projects was designing costumes for a reboot of "The Munsters" during the 1980s. She went on to work on major feature films and TV shows, outfitting celebrities including David Bowie, Kelsey Grammer, Jimmy Stewart and Jessica Lange.

Swerling and her husband, Jerry, moved to Richmond from California in 2016. Although she's retired, Swerling still

surrounds herself with Hollywood. She's plastered the walls of the sewing center with posters of her favorite movies and celebrities, and her 30 sewing machines are all named after actors, from Dick Van Dyke to Paul Newman and Audrey Hepburn. The decor adds to the experience for club members. "I want them to walk in, feel inspired and get excited about something," Swerling says.

Richmond Really Sews!

Originally formed on Facebook after Swerling's plaintive request to meet fellow sewing enthusiasts received a hearty response, Richmond Really Sews now has 1,000 members. A smaller group of regulars attends Saturday sewing sessions, monthly meetings and occasional field trips to New York City for fabric shopping.

Even if someone has never touched a sewing machine, Swerling encourages them to give it a try. She provides fabric, thread, zippers and elastic — whatever keeps people sewing. Many newcomers quickly advance and go on to learn modern mending, sashiko (a Japanese style of mending) and other embroidery, or costume design for cosplay.

"If they're beginners, I put them on a Kenmore or a vintage Singer," Swerling explains, referencing brands of sewing machines. "If they're a little more >



advanced, I put them on one of my vintage Berninas. I also have a couple of Vikings and eight sergers." (A serger creates professionally finished seams.)

Karen Swerling (left) and Beth Watkins, who learned about the sewing studio on NextDoor

Many of the members showcased their work in November at their annual fundraiser, Richmond Frocktails, a fashion show featuring their handmade creations. While Swerling donates her time and talent, she relies on funds raised at the event to cover sewing machine maintenance and supplies.

Not everyone was enthusiastic about modeling at first, but with Swerling's encouragement, they each hit the runway with confidence. "I told them, 'Own your body. You're all beautiful; go out and show the world what you can do,'" she says. "When you wear something, your outfit speaks for you. Our country is a melange of people, and I encourage members to show their ethnicity. With sewing, you can express where you come from and how you feel. We can't do that when we go to the store."

One of the newest members is Hayley Naples Dotson, 25, who recently moved to Richmond from Austin, Texas. Searching for ways to improve her sewing skills and

meet new friends, she discovered Richmond Really Sews on Facebook. "I was immediately embraced and felt like I had a community here, which was really nice after leaving friends and family and moving across the country," she says.

Dotson learned to sew as a child from her grandmother. "I remember my first project was sewing cloth napkins for my lunch box in third grade," she recalls. "I was so excited to pick out the absolute wildest and most colorful fabrics."

From there, she mostly taught herself, picking up technical skills from YouTube videos. In the past few years, her sewing has picked up momentum. "I love having something totally separate from my job, where I'm doing something with my hands away from a screen," Dotson says. "There's a lot of problem-solving and having a creative mindset. Sewing helps flex that muscle."

She also loves the ability to barter the old-fashioned way. When a neighbor helped her and her husband move a heavy desk into their new apartment, she mended his sports coat in return. "I love having a skillset I can offer as a favor," she says.

Thanks to the club, Dotson says, she's been sewing furiously and takes pride in showing her finished garments to her grandmother. She made her own dress for her wedding rehearsal dinner in September — a white satin sheath she modeled during Frocktails — as well as a dress to wear for Thanksgiving. "If I'm struggling with a project, I can ask questions and immediately have the members as a resource," she says. "They are more than willing to teach me, help me problem-solve and show me options. You can't find that online."

Another member, Kristina Cassidy, made Frocktails a family affair this year. She sewed clothes for herself as well as her 6-year-old son, Kiran, and 3-year-old daughter, Nayana. All three modeled in the show. "My grandmother was a big sewist, and my mom used to make my clothing, fix my buttons and hem my





“I love the **PROCESS** of it —
using my hands, seeing something
COME TO LIFE and then
actually getting to **WEAR IT** and
say, ‘**LOOK, I MADE THIS!**’”

—*Kristina Cassidy*

pants,” Cassidy says. “When I had kids, I wanted to be able to make them things and take care of them in that way.”

Kiran is sensitive to tags and likes his clothes a certain way. “He calls them his ‘Mama-made’ clothes,” Cassidy says. She and Nayana are making a bag together, and she’s helping Kiran sew his own tooth fairy pillow. The kids are enrolled

in a Montessori school, and she’s grateful sewing is part of their curriculum.

Over the last six years, Cassidy has taught herself to sew while raising her kids, holding a full-time job and earning a doctoral degree. For help, she’s relied on sewing tutorials from her mother and on YouTube. She’s also found companies online, including Ellie & Mac and Boo & Lu, that provide simple patterns with step-by-step videos.

“Sewing is really exciting and empowering, and it also feels meditative,” she says.

“I love the process of it — using my hands, seeing something come to life and then actually getting to wear it and say, ‘Look, I made this!’”

One of the most experienced members, Katia Simmons, has been sewing for more than 60 years. She lived abroad as a child, and because she was much taller than her peers, she learned to sew out of necessity. “I can remember going with my mom to this wonderful fabric store in Paris that was several stories high — it was amazing,” she says. “My dad found a store that had the prototypes of couture dresses for cheap prices, so my mom always looked like a Parisian model.”

She still loves making her own clothes, from Victorian costumes just for fun to airy sundresses she wears to drive her school bus routes during the warmer months. “Many times, I can make much better quality clothes than what’s in the stores — especially for the money,” Simmons says. “When I go to [department stores], I’m shocked by the quality of fabric and the prices. It’s highway robbery.”

While she loves the craft of sewing, she especially loves the friendships she’s formed with other members. “We don’t >

Below, left to right: At Frocktails in November, Hayley Dotson modeled the dress she made for her wedding rehearsal; Ronny Lee showed a garment he designed from upcycled cotton T-shirts; and Kristina Cassidy and her children, Nayana and Kiran, appeared in coordinating outfits Cassidy sewed.



discuss politics, we don't discuss religion, and age and gender don't matter," Simmons says. "We come together in friendship, and we sew. Everybody's happy. Every single person I've met in the group has been so much fun."

A Return to Sewing

The buzz around Richmond Really Sews is indicative of a larger trend. Since the pandemic, sewing has been increasing in popularity and attracting younger enthusiasts.

Abby Glassenberg is the co-founder and president of the Craft Industry Alliance, which represents thousands of members in the U.S., Canada and abroad. The organization provides research, podcasts, webinars and blogs to support people who craft and sew. She says the public's interest in sewing spiked during the coronavirus pandemic, and the hobby has grown in the years since.

"People figured out they could make masks at home, but sewing also gave them something to do and something they could control when everything felt so out of control," Glassenberg says. "People found sewing for the first time or dusted off their skills, and there was a big demand for sewing machines, thread and elastic. They were as hard to get as Clorox wipes and toilet paper."

According to a 2024 report published by Yahoo Finance, the global market for sewing machines is expected to grow nearly 50%, from \$4.7 billion in 2022 to \$6.9 billion by 2030. "People really underestimate the crafting business," Glassenberg says. "Etsy is one of the four largest marketplaces in the United States. It's all dedicated to handmade, and it's now a publicly traded company."

Because public schools have cut home economics programs, Glassenberg says, an entire gen-

eration never learned to sew. However, social media is helping to fill that gap and increase exposure. "There's so much content online, and both boys and girls are learning a life skill," she says. "Learning to sew can open their eyes to the possibilities of creativity, whether it's fashion design, home decor or mending items they already have."

Kimberly Guthrie, an associate professor in the department of fashion design and merchandising at Virginia Commonwealth University, says the creative sewing projects found on social media are generating excitement around fashion design. "These kinds of videos are inspiring and are driving many of our students to major in fashion," she says. "One of my students said that seeing more fashion students and small designers find success through social media makes it feel more accessible as a career and easier to make a name for themselves."

Lilya Korenman, who owns Couture by LK Design on Libbie Avenue, frequently helps VCU fashion design students in her shop as well as customers as young as middle school age. For the past 30 years, she's gained a reputation for her custom designs and curated selection of high-quality apparel fabrics, laces, trims and notions. "Younger people — boys and girls — are discovering sewing as a way to create their own individuality, and it's something they can do themselves," Korenman says. "A younger generation of shoppers is coming from all over the greater Richmond area, as well as parts of Northern Virginia and Charlottesville." She's also seeing more older customers who are retired from corporate jobs coming back to the hobby following the pandemic.

To meet the growing demand, sewing classes and summer camps are popping up around town for both children and adults at places including Sew Fun, a sewing school on Parham Road, and the Visual Arts Center of Richmond. Shop Made in Virginia, a store that opened in Scott's Addition in October, is like an in-person Etsy site with art, jewelry, housewares, pottery, clothing and other handmade

Lilya Korenman owns Couture by LK Design, a fabric and design store on Libbie Avenue.



FROM LEFT: JAY PAUL; COURTESY KIMBERLY GUTHRIE

TAILORED FOR YOU

Find Richmond Really Sews! on Facebook and Instagram. These additional resources offer sewing classes, supplies and more:

ALL BRANDS SEWING CENTER
allbrandssewingcenter.com

**AMERICAN SEWING GUILD OF
CENTRAL VIRGINIA**
richmondasg.org

ARTÉE FABRICS
arteefabricsandhome.com

BOBBIN AND BOLT
bobbinandbolt.com

CRAFT INDUSTRY ALLIANCE
craftindustryalliance.org

COUTURE BY LK DESIGN
couturebylkdesign.com

JOANN FABRICS
joann.com

QUILTING ADVENTURES
quiltingadventures.com

QUILTER'S CORNER
quilterscornerva.com

SCRAP CREATIVE REUSE
richmond.scrapcreativereuse.org

SEW BRAVE SEWING LESSONS
sewbraverva.com

SEW FUN
sewfunva.com

SHOP MADE IN VIRGINIA
shopmadeinva.com/classes

U-FAB INTERIORS
u-fab.com

UNSPRUNG UPHOLSTERY
unsprungupholstery.com

VIKING SEWING GALLERY
vikingsewinggallery.com

VISUAL ARTS CENTER OF RICHMOND
visarts.org

goods from about 100 local artists.

"Sewing is definitely not a lost art," says Sara Maslyn, a photographer who works at Shop Made in Virginia. "A lot of my friends in their 20s and 30s are looking to learn this skill. Part of our space is for creatives, and we host classes and meetups to sew together as well as do other crafts. It's such a great space to connect and learn."

A Solution for Fast Fashion

Glassenberg with the Craft Industry Alliance notes that more and more people are drawn to sewing out of concern for the environment. "We don't actually need any more clothes — there are enough clothes in existence to clothe the entire world for generations," she says. "And yet every single fashion brand is coming out with new lines for the spring."

According to a 2022 study by Boston University, Americans discard 34 billion tons of textiles each year, or about 100 pounds per person. Around two-thirds wind up in landfills. "More people, and especially young people, are asking what they can do to divert [clothing] from the waste stream," Glassenberg says.

Sewists are mending items to make them last longer or altering their clothes when the designs fall out of fashion. They're also shopping at secondhand stores, then modifying the clothing to make custom pieces they can't find in fast fashion.

"People are obsessed with thrift flip nowadays," says Kayla Kim, a senior at VCU majoring in fashion design. "Sewing machines are so affordable now — anyone can just grab one."

"There are so many people on Instagram doing it as a hobby and making really cool stuff," adds her peer Ella Nassauer.

Videos on TikTok using the hashtag #thrifflip currently have more than 2.3 billion views. Many users are upcycling — showcasing an outfit made from an old



Caroline Drumm, a sophomore fashion design student at VCU, works on a skirt idea as part of a patternmaking course.

comforter, making a handbag from scraps of old jeans or transforming a Chanel bag into a top.

Members of Richmond Really Sews have also embraced the trend. "One of our sewists, Tanisha Finney, made a raincoat from a shower curtain, and Ash Tyler thrifted sheets, draperies and bedcovers and made this Renaissance outfit," Karen Swerling says. "It's unbelievable what they can do."

Hayley Dotson says that in this world of instant gratification, she loves the meaningful process of slow fashion. This past Christmas, she decided to give only handmade gifts. "I'm a more mindful consumer now," she says. "I wanted to be more intentional over the holiday season, so I sewed everything."

For each person on her list, she carefully selected just the right fabric and pattern. "There's a lot of magic in creating," she says. "I could have quickly gotten an Amazon top seller, but instead I sat at my sewing machine for hours, and I made something that didn't exist before. That's really empowering. There were flaws, but it's hard not to fall in love with those flaws when I'm giving the gift of my time." ■

Doctor's Orders

Richmond's new mayor hopes to once again guide the city through uncertain times

By Mark Newton

S

tanding at the Church Hill Overlook, Richmond's 81st mayor sees the past 24 years of his life represented in the city's skyline.

Dr. Danny Avula, a pediatric specialist, first alights on Virginia Commonwealth University's medical buildings. "I think about the place where I spent an ungodly number of hours at the hospital during residency," he says, laughing. Next is Capitol Square and facilities such as the Patrick Henry Building, "where I was in the basement every day during the situation room," working to drive up COVID-19 vaccination rates in the commonwealth.

"I see the river that I love," the longtime Church Hill resident continues, "with my favorite spot in the city: the [T] Tyler Potterfield [Memorial] Bridge." The James makes Avula recall "so many stories of my kids going to Passages [Adventure] Camp — my son Luke worked as a kayak instructor on the river" and "so many family treks across the pedestrian bridge to Belle Isle." He ends with the revitalized Main Street Station, which to him is a "beautiful, emblematic" convergence of old and new in Richmond that shows "where we are as a city that has such deep history but also is barreling into the future." >



History Repeating

The 46-year-old father of five is himself representative of the past comingling with the present. The city's first mayor, William Foushee, was a physician. So, too, is Richmond's first immigrant and Indian mayor. Avula arrived in America at 6 months old and grew up in a Northern Virginia household, the child of U.S. Department of Defense employees. He studied biology at the University of Virginia, where he met his future wife, Mary Kay. It was at VCU's School of Medicine, however, that Avula determined he was destined to work beyond the four walls of a hospital.

"When I started to get into the patient-serving work, being at VCU, serving a largely underserved, low-income population, it started to become more and more clear to me that the things that we were doing to try to address health issues were so secondary to what patients were actually wrestling with," he says. "Every day, I would see the impact of not having stable housing or not having regular access to food or not having a job with a steady income, and all of those inputs leading to stress and medicine noncompliance and mental health issues.

"Thinking that this path in primary care, which is where

I was headed, was only going to be so effective with a lot of patients who are really on the brink — financially, emotionally, relationally — I decided I was much more interested in pursuing the macro solutions, like how do we look at policy or ways that we address the community and improve community health," Avula continues. In his last year of med school, he worked near and far, including stints in the Richmond City Health Department and studying global health in Kenya. Those experiences underlined for him the impact of what are known today as the social determinants of health.

From there, Avula would become director of the Richmond City and Henrico County health departments, Virginia state vaccination liaison, and commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services.

"My career began to intersect more and more with housing and economic development and community development," he says, "and I think that period is when folks started saying, 'You should think about running for office someday.' That's probably when the seeds were planted for this journey."

Now, as mayor, Avula says he can take his work one step further. "Nobody has more influence than the mayor and City Council in really trying to co-create that vision for our city and then put our investments in places that are going to create more affordable housing and to protect low-income residents from being displaced, [as well as] increasing access to healthy foods and [expanding] the mass transit network. That's the work of the next four years, and it's super exciting."

Restoring Trust

Most Virginians met Avula five years ago as he delivered vaccination updates alongside a fellow pediatrician, then-Gov. Ralph Northam, during the state's frequent pandemic press conferences. Besides building community resilience to COVID-19, Avula's other tall tasks included restoring trust in government and combating misinformation. Both were complicated by voices "that want to cloud reality," as Avula puts it. As he once again finds himself in a leadership role with Donald Trump as president, the new mayor says there are lessons to be carried from the pandemic response into City Hall.



In his role as Virginia's coronavirus vaccination coordinator, Dr. Danny Avula speaks to the press at a Richmond COVID-19 vaccination event in January 2021 as then-Gov. Ralph Northam looks on.

Mayor-elect Danny Avula speaks at the RVA Rapid Transit "Cooling the Commute" premier and fundraiser at Triple Crossing Beer - Fulton on Dec. 3.



OPPOSITE PAGE: COURTESY OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA RALPH NORTHAM; ABOVE: JAY PAUL

"It's brutal," he says about separating fact from fiction, "and I think it's a sign of our times about the way that people not only ingest information, the sources they go to for information, but what information actually takes root. ... There's this reality that the salacious stuff, the negative stuff, goes viral in ways that good, credible, solid, evidence-based information does not, and that's what we were up against in public health during the pandemic."

"I think it's what we're going to be up against as I venture into this new job, whether it's health-related stuff, or what is happening with public housing redevelopment, or what [our plans are] to develop the South Side."

The antidote, according to Avula, is consistent, transparent communication. As an example, he says that because "I was on the local news three, four, five times a week" during those pandemic press conferences, he was often recognized as "the doc from TV" while campaigning for mayor.

"It did reaffirm that having that kind of consistent presence does build connection," he reasons, "and if you are able and willing to just say the truth and say, 'Here's what we know, here's what we don't know, here's what we're trying to do to move us forward,' people actually are comforted by that. I think that was a big part of Virginia's story during the pandemic."

That work also taught him how to build rapport with skeptics.

"I had a lot more trouble with my constituents in South-

west Virginia and Appalachia than I did in other parts of the state, and so [I needed to understand] what were some of their hesitations and what was the history of that community," Avula says. "Twenty years prior, the opioid epidemic had ravaged Appalachia and, for people living there, the experience of that was the federal government [rubber]-stamped the use of oxycodone and put it in the hands of doctors everywhere and promoted its usage, and that led to the absolute devastation of communities."

"Now here we were, 20, 25 years later, saying, 'Hey, the federal government has approved these vaccines that are going to save your lives.' And people are like, 'Really, we've done this before.' And so I think part of that trust-building is listening, validating, understanding where people are coming from and what's driving their behavior, and then trying to provide a factual message that either supports or counters that."

Avula says the biggest lesson from battling health care misinformation — as Trump puts forward Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a vaccine and water fluoridation critic, as his nominee for secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services — is that the work that needs to be done here doesn't change regardless of who is in charge nationally.

"The call for local leaders is to protect and support healing and thriving in our community, and that means really looking out for the best interests of people here in Richmond. Whether these are conversations about flu- >

The Avula family (from left): David, Kiran, Mary Kay, Danny, Abby, Arjanae and Luke



oridation, we can continue to work with our state counterparts to ensure that that's happening. We control the water supply, and so we do have local decision-making authority and autonomy around things like that.

"There will be some hard times where funding streams around things that are really important, like public housing, I would imagine, may start to get clawed back. Then it becomes even more important for us at the local level, working with our regional partners and our state partners, to really get access to the resources we need to take care of folks here in Richmond."

'You Are Needed'

In the run up to inauguration day, Avula has maintained his usual frenetic pace. He has generally been able to work "about

A Changed City

Outgoing Mayor Levar Stoney reflects on his legacy

By Mark Newton

Richmond's 80th mayor, Levar Stoney, completed his second four-year term Dec. 31. He sat down with Richmond magazine earlier that month to discuss how the city has changed under his watch, what lessons he has learned and what he intends to do if elected lieutenant governor of Virginia this November.

Richmond magazine: How do you feel about your time in office? What do you think is your legacy?

Mayor Levar Stoney: I'm at peace with the body of work that we've been able to produce. I'm extremely proud of the work done by this team, from the people who are in this office, down to those who push the brooms around City Hall. When I started this journey out, I was 35 years old – I've learned a whole hell of a lot since then.

We've cut poverty by a third under my watch. There are more jobs here. There are more homes here. There's more investment here. Neighborhoods across the city have transformed right before our eyes. It's not just Scott's Addition and Manchester. I'm proud that I kept my word when it comes to public education – we've seen funding for Richmond Public Schools increase by 58% under my watch.

I'm proud that we've seen an improvement in

our infrastructure; that's a key core service that was lacking eight years ago. When I came in as mayor, 70% of our roads were considered in poor condition. Now 75% of our roads are considered in good condition.

One thing that took a lot of courage to do, and you don't get an opportunity to reflect on some of this stuff until the end, is the removal of those Confederate monuments. I look back at it now, and you see the success the city has had, post pandemic, post the removal. It was one of the reasons I think we were being held back as a city. We are now a more inclusive, more welcoming city after the removal of those monuments, and now a Black kid born in the city can be proud and not have to answer why you have Confederate monuments standing in your city.

RM: What did you learn from failures such as the Navy Hill development project and the two votes

for a casino, which is now going to Petersburg? How did they inform more successful initiatives like the Diamond District?

Stoney: With the wisdom of hindsight, we would have done it differently, but it allowed me to learn from Navy Hill's rejection, to change course and approach the Diamond District in a more community-centric way. Instead of saying, 'I think this is what we need,' we heard from people for many years saying, 'This is what we want.' I still believe that Navy Hill would have been a true shot in the arm for our downtown. But you know, missed opportunities happen, and you just have to capitalize on what opportunities may come in the future. And I think we've done that with the Diamond District.

With the casino opportunities, I've been a proponent of the working class in the city, and there are people today who have been paid better wages because of that opportunity, such as in Danville. It didn't work out. Now it's my hope that Richmonders in South Side have an opportunity to get in line for some good jobs. We've done a great job in reconstructing the safety net here in the city, but we've got to do a whole lot more than social programming to put food on the table and keep a roof over the families' heads.

RM: If you had four more years, what would that look like?

Stoney: I would spend even more time tackling the redevelopment and transformation of public housing. I wish that the mayor could have a stronger

once a month" as a pediatric hospitalist (specializing in the care of hospitalized patients) at Chippenham Hospital in Henrico County but says, "I think I will totally have to reevaluate in this new job, in this new season of life."

And rather than kick back on the sofa, he spent much of his Thanksgiving break in the hospital, managing pediatric patients. "I worked 7P to 7A Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights," he says, noting that he did find some time to celebrate family and keep things low key. "My family is all in town," he adds, "and so my brother and sister-in-law, who are physicians here in the area, they hosted [Thanksgiving] at their house in Hanover."

For his family, Avula says, it "will be interesting to see how they adapt to this new chapter of our lives. ... There's both a sense of excitement but also uncertainty. I don't think any of us know what the new rhythms are going to look like. And thankfully, our family has been through really hard seasons of work. The early months of COVID, both in 2020 and then when I took over the vaccination effort in 2021, those were 100-hour weeks for a couple

months, and so my family didn't see me at all, and my wife basically said, 'You are needed in this time.' She saw it as a deployment, like she was sending me out to do this work, and she would hold the fort down at home, and she did that in really beautiful and amazing ways. ... We couldn't do it without the strength of our family and the strength of the community that we're a part of."

As he looks over the city he now leads from Church Hill, a similar sentiment comes to Avula.

"I think it is just such an incredible honor to be able to serve this place that has shaped me and shaped my family, and that we have committed two decades of our life to trying to help make better," he says. "Now I have yet another opportunity to do that, and I hope that not only is the model that my wife and I want to be for our kids and our community, but that the people on the margins, that the most vulnerable people in this community, see me as somebody who is going to elevate their voice and act on their behalf and make decisions in ways that are going to help everybody in the city heal and thrive." ■



“
**We've done a great job
in reconstructing the
safety net here in the
city, but we've got to
do a whole lot more ...**

—Mayor Levar Stoney

able to preserve and construct over 6,000 new, affordable units here in the city, and we've been able to squirrel away some dollars for the future as well to continue the drumbeat of building more affordable homes in Richmond.

RM: What does that work look like if you are elected lieutenant governor?

Stoney: I'm going to fight for fairness for those who've been marginalized. And that fair shot for me looks like raising the minimum wage and ensuring that people have access to paid family leave. We have a lot of high-income earners in this state who I think need to pay their fair share so we can have the best quality education possible.

RM: You've said that this job's a pressure cooker. How have you prepared the incoming mayor for it?

Stoney: I've had some frank conversations with

Dr. Avula about the ins and outs of this job, and it's an all-consuming role. This is my full-time job. I come to work every day ready to swing for the fences and push the envelope for the voters and the residents of this great city. And there are going to be times when they love you, and there are going to be times when they don't love you so much.

When I think about the real pressure of my tenure, it occurred during 2020. There is no owner's manual for a global-wide pandemic. A lot of times, because of the nonsense we were hearing from the federal government, we were doing a lot of this on our own, leading the way, and then we saw some social upheaval happen here in our streets. And I look at some of the other cities around the country that were also experiencing the same thing, and we did far better, I think in, No. 1, our handling of it but, No. 2, the success that occurred post both the pandemic and the social unrest.

What I was told early on is to stay humble, because if you don't stay humble, the job will humble you, and 2020 was a humbling experience. And so, I remind my friend Danny Avula that this job is going to give you thorns, but sometimes you can also get a lot of roses as well. And when you get the thorns, you've just got to wake up the next day and get back at it. How I got through those tough moments was just to put my head down and work even harder. ■

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



PROFESSIONAL REMODELING ORGANIZATION

CONGRATULATIONS to the 2024 PRO Central Virginia Remodeler of the Year Award Winners. For a more in depth look at this year's winners, see the feature in this month's issue of R•Home magazine.



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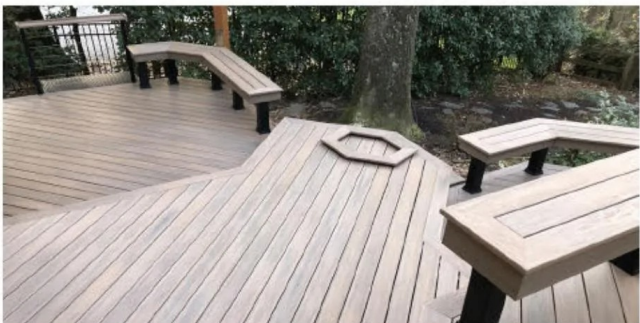
With team partners ARCHITESSA, Closet Factory, Custom View, Ferguson, Kathy Corbet Interiors, MMIS, Wellborn + Wright, WinSupply of Richmond



RESIDENTIAL BATH OVER \$100,000

Lane Homes & Remodeling

With team partner Ferguson



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LIVING UNDER \$150,000

Moore Done Contracting



INTERIOR/EXTERIOR ELEMENT

Kathy Corbet Interiors

With team partners Carroll Plumbing & Heating, Inc., Mosaic Home Interiors, WinSupply of Richmond.



RESIDENTIAL KITCHEN OVER \$200,000

Gardner Construction Corp

With team partners Ferguson, Anne Pulliam Interiors



RESIDENTIAL INTERIOR \$150,000 AND OVER

Gardner Construction Corp

With team partners Ferguson, Anne Pulliam Interiors



RESIDENTIAL KITCHEN \$100,000 - \$200,000

Lane Homes & Remodeling

With team partners Ferguson, Siewers Lumber & Millwork



COMMERCIAL RENOVATION

Leo Lantz Construction, Inc.

With team partners Appliance Contract Sales, Classic Granite & Marble, Colonial Floors of Va., Ferguson, INARAY, Morris Tile Distributors, WinSupply of Richmond, Uniqueness Bella Stone Surfaces.



RESIDENTIAL DETACHED STRUCTURE

Paragon Construction Company LLC

With team partner Siewers Lumber & Millwork



RESIDENTIAL ADDITION

Branch Builders



RESIDENTIAL BATH UNDER \$50,000

Kathy Corbet Interiors

With team partner WinSupply of Richmond



CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Lane Homes & Remodeling

With team partners Closet Factory and Costen Floors



HOME AUTOMATION/ENTERTAINMENT/MEDIA

Sound & Image Design



RESIDENTIAL HISTORICAL RENOVATION/ RESTORATION

Custom Kitchens, Inc.

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RESIDENTIAL BATH \$50,000 - \$100,000

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RESIDENTIAL EXTERIOR UNDER \$100,000

Deck Creations



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Edited by EILEEN MELLON

IN-DEPTH

A SEQUEL AND A STATEMENT

Adarra reintroduces itself in the former Mamma Zu space

By Eileen Mellon

When spouses Randall and Lyne Doetzer first opened their restaurant, Adarra, in Jackson Ward on Valentine's Day in 2019, they made some concessions.

Despite the limitations of the space, such as the lack of a walk-in freezer, the tenured duo managed to crank out plates of seasonal, unfussy Basque-inspired delicacies, curate one of the most expansive biodynamic wine selections in the city, and garner regional and national acclaim.

But a desire for more, a feeling of "What if?" lingered. Never losing sight of what they wanted to be, they remained patient.

A few years into operations, they learned the building that had housed one of Richmond's most iconic, garlic-tinged Italian hideaways for nearly three decades was back on the market after a development deal fell through. In the summer of 2022, the pair purchased the inconspicuous former site of Mamma Zu, at 501 S. Pine St. in Oregon Hill. The power move gave the Doetzers something they had been working toward for their entire careers: ownership of their own building and, in turn, control of their restaurant's future.

"This was the path forward that makes the most sense," Randall says. "It was super important for us to find a building that looked like what we had before, a huge goal to have it feel the same. A lot comes down to

having the same staff and the same vibe. A lot of things will be very familiar but much more put together. We're real big romantics of, just the old-school way of restaurants, really. We want to bring the same uniqueness back to the corner."

Last month, the Doetzers reintroduced their magnum opus in its forever home, a deeply personal project 2 1/2 years in the making. The tiny window on the side of the building now offers a peek into a very different space.

The restaurant's details reflect a series of lessons learned over many years in the business. Thoughtful touches include a

filtered water station for staff out of sight of diners; a soundproof office for a silent escape; an ample dish pit with its own thermostat and speaker controls; and a fully shockproof, temperature-, light- and humidity-controlled room that can preserve the roughly 3,000 bottles of organic and low-intervention wines the level-two sommeliers have amassed over the years. And yes, a massive walk-in.

Of his team, Randall says, "To give adults incentive to be at work and to do a good job, you have to be able to give them the right things and be able to give them the space to do it."

Every decision was precisely considered, from the distance between tables to the paging system and the imported stone in the bathroom, coincidentally hailing from the Basque region of Spain. While checking these boxes led to a long, costly and near-complete overhaul of the building, the Doetzers see it as the only way.

"With our professional lives, basically our whole lives, we've been beholden to a landlord," Randall says. "We just never had the ability to stretch out, to be able to get new things, to be able to have the storage that we need to do [what we do]. It's just giving ourselves more back end and fixing all the problems that we've always had."

Aiding in their vision was 86-year-old designer and artist Ronnie Renmark of Renmark Designs, who also worked on the original Adarra and does every-



Adarra owners Randall and Lyne Doetzer



thing by hand. Essentially leaving only the shell of the restaurant, they have given it a total renovation — with the help of Kettlewell Construction — while managing to preserve the building and exude a timeless look.

Inside, the new Adarra feels transcendent. The dining room is opulent but not over the top, regal yet refined and captivating but not showy. There are pops of handcarved hardwood, impeccably soft leathers, stunning marble and glowing, gold-framed, beautifully detailed watercolors gracing the walls.

The menu will be steered by a custom, adjustable, wood-fired cooking system sourced from Atlanta. “This is one of the things that we wanted to do, run the whole entire service off of this,” Randall says of the kitchen setup.

In the back of the house, he is joined by longtime Adarra chef Nick Hancock, with whom he has worked for nearly 15 years since meeting at Julep’s New Southern Cuisine.

“Our staff is the only reason this works

Adarra is open
Thursday through
Monday.

at all; they understand the weight that comes with opening here,” Randall says.

Despite employing a vested, veteran crew, including bar manager Danny McDermott, the Doetzers know this will be a learning experience and that the dishes emerging from the kitchen will develop over time.

“The evolution is going to be the interesting part of it, because what we do in the beginning with this is probably going to be very different than what we do in a month, in two months, in six months, in a year,” Randall says.

Speaking to an overall decline in quality and excitement in the field, as well as a dire need for a more appealing and sustainable industry for both employees and customers, Randall says, “Just having this extra seating capacity, this walkable neighborhood, everything [makes] it a more adult experience for everyone.”

He adds that while they can’t change the cost of goods, they can try to ensure that the choice to dine with them is

undoubtedly worth it.

“We’re putting it all out there. We have to make some incentive for people to go out,” he says. “I think that’s really at the heart of this whole place: Everybody here legitimately gives a f—. Restaurants need to be a certain thing, a certain feel when you go in there; you need to be taken care of and not have to worry about s—. It’s our job to make sure that the value is there, and that’s everything that we try and do; that’s everything that we have to do. What we always ask people to do is just kind of trust the process.”

Adarra 2.0 presents a direct and deliberate message from its team: Give it your all or don’t even bother.

“This is the loudest voice that we have as we come into the most iconic spot in the city, come in [and] do the most ridiculous job, with the most ridiculous, over-the-top s—, all the most ridiculous, over-the-top people,” Randall says. “You know, do you want to come play the game or not? Why open anything if you’re not going to f— do anything any better than before?” ■



AROUND TOWN

Best Bites

Dishes and drinks we can't stop dreaming about

ENGLISH MUFFIN BREAD

\$7.50 at Montana Gold Bread Co., 3543 W. Cary St.

White bread is sometimes used as a defining example of something boring or unimaginative, but Carytown's Montana Gold Bread Co. is carrying out a decades-long campaign to change that perception. Enter: English muffin bread. Yeasty, chewy and more flavorful than its basic Wonder Bread archetype, this loaf has made me look forward to a morning slice of toast. It's great with butter, but even better with jam or honey. —**Kevin Johnson**

THE TONY

\$16 at Susie's, 1600 W. Cary St.

Warm, comforting, nostalgia-inducing: The Tony, a crave-worthy brisket sandwich from newly opened Jewish-Moroccan deli Susie's, is a winter pick-me-up in handheld form. Slow-cooked slabs of thick brisket are topped with melted Swiss, faintly sweet caramelized onions and a zingy horseradish crema. Get cozy in a glimmering, curtain-adorned corner of the dining room and order a bowl of matzo ball soup to bring the meal home. —**Eileen Mellon**

THE VELVETEEN

\$16 at Goldwing.

910 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd.

As far as getting a cocktail in Richmond, I have yet to discover a destination as elegant and lively as Goldwing. It's not a place you stumble upon, as there is no signage indicating that a decadent, dark and cozy lounge lies behind its doors. Enjoying a live jazz band while sipping on The Velvetreen — a silky-smooth, sumac-infused riff on a sour — at this recently debuted bar from the owners of adjacent Fighting Fish is the perfect way to spend a night in Scott's Addition. —**Abbi Bennett**

EVENT PICKS

Richmond's unofficial vegan restaurant week, **VEGAN 72**, returns Jan. 21-26 with over two dozen restaurants across the region serving up plant-based specials.

Varina's Celeste Farms will host **THE POINT 5 DINNER EXPERIENCE** on Jan. 19, a multicourse meal featuring produce from the farm paired with nonalcoholic cocktails.



REMEMBER THAT PLACE?

CUPERTINO'S NY BAGELS AND DELI

Nino Palazzotto



Hot and new can steal the spotlight, but what about longstanding local favorites? Each month, we'll visit a Richmond-area restaurant that has been in business 15 years or longer.

Proprietor Nino Palazzotto has been at the helm of Cupertino's NY Bagels and Deli for the past decade, but his story has a humble beginning.

"I was hired as a 'dough guy' by the original owner, Walter Baietti," he says.

After leaving the shop for a job at the now-shuttered Cafe Caturra, Palazzotto received a call from his old boss. "In 2014, he called me up, asking me to come back, and I came back as manager."

Baietti retired shortly after, and Palazzotto then stepped into the ownership role.

"When Mr. Baietti started Cupertino's, which is named after his grandfather, back in 2007, there really weren't any local bagel shops around," Palazzotto says. "Cupertino's filled a niche."

While there are now a few more players on the scene, Cupertino's carries the distinc-

tion of being Richmond's oldest bagel shop. Palazzotto proudly explains that their traditional Jewish-Austrian recipe creates what he calls the quintessential NYC bagel: "a hard crust and a soft, chewy inside."

Offering the classic Big Apple bagel was the original mission and inspiration for Cupertino's, and the shop remains focused on that goal after all these years.

"Our repeat business ... is 75%," Palazzotto says. "Some folks we see every day, some folks come in for breakfast and lunch, too."

The bagels at Cupertino's share the stage with a variety of deli staples, including pastrami, sailor and club sandwiches. All the breads are baked fresh in the store daily.

"We have people coming from Petersburg, Chesterfield, Ashland to come here," Palazzotto says. "We're very grateful for that, and we want to keep the quality." —**Matthew Sporn**

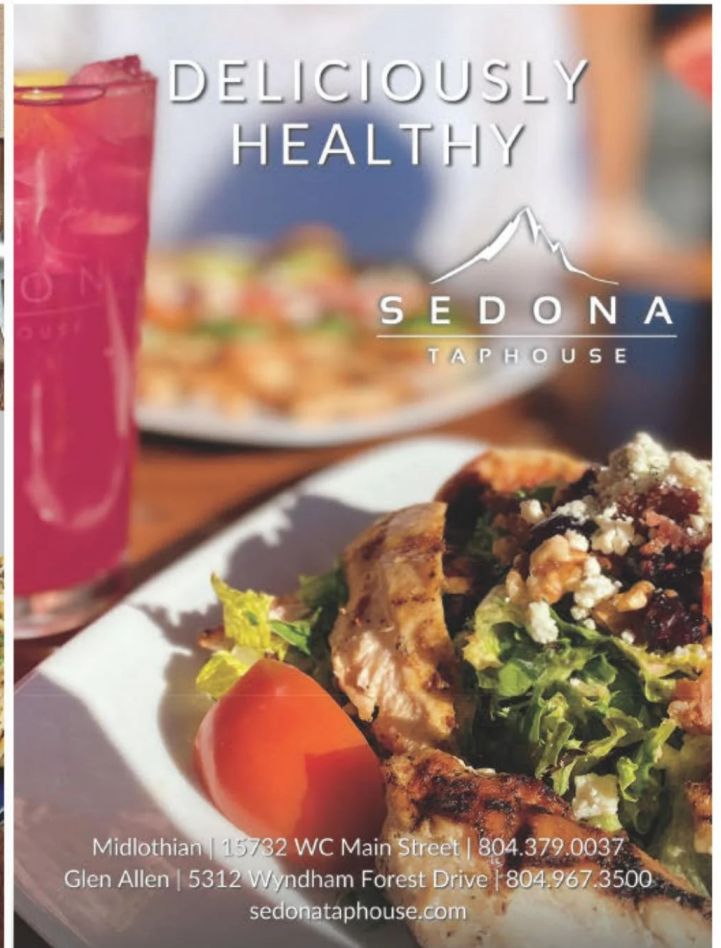


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SPECIALS

Deep-dish pizza from Redemption BBQ

Deep-dish Deliverance

Chicago-style pizza finds a home in Henrico

By Lauren Vincelli

A taste of the Windy City is available without a plane ticket, thanks to Redemption BBQ and Market (3420 Lauderdale Drive) and its owner, John Vest, a pastor turned pitmaster turned pizzaiolo. Redemption currently offers hot deep-dish Chicago pies every Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The open-secret offering started as a love letter to Vest's wife, Anna, a native of Chicago. The couple lived there together for 16 years before moving back to Virginia and starting Redemption BBQ as a food truck. During their stint in Chicago, the duo often dined at Pizano's, a pizza joint from Lou Malnati, son of Rudy Malnati, the original chef of Pizzeria Uno and the earliest known maker of deep-dish pies. Inspired by the Malnatis, Vest set out to re-create a Chicago deep-dish pizza

for his wife but soon discovered there was demand among local pizza lovers.

Why is deep dish special? It starts with the crust. In the Midwest, the mix of butter, cornmeal, and Heckers & Ceresota brand all-purpose unbleached flours produces a biscuit-style dough. The result is a tender and flaky crust, more akin to pie than pizza, capable of supporting weighty toppings. Vest has been teaching his protege at the market how to craft deep, thin, even edges, a technique that takes practice to master.

The build of their 9-inch deep-dish pizza, Vest explains, begins with a hefty ball of buttery dough pressed into the bottom and sides of a sturdy springform cake pan.



Redemption BBQ owner John Vest

"On top of that, there's a half pound of sliced full-fat mozzarella cheese," Vest says, "then the Chicago sausage. We make the sausage ourselves, in-house. You take a half-pound of sausage and press it down flat all the way to the edge to cover the cheese so that when it cooks, it ends up being one solid layer of cooked sausage. Then you put the sauce on top of that, and I put just a little Italian seasoning and Parmesan cheese on top of that because it looks nice."

You read that right: sauce on top. This flip-flopped approach is why deep-dish pizza can be so controversial among pizza purists.

"That's what the Chicago style is," Vest says. "It's like the opposite of every other pizza. The beauty of that sausage version is that, in the oven while the pizza bakes, all the grease, the juices and the seasoning from that sausage as it cooks get mixed in with the tomatoes; it makes a beautiful extra sauce."

Redemption BBQ serves pasture-raised organic meats. Vest originally worked with Virginia-based Autumn Olive Farms, but

following a boom in business after being named one of the "Best

New Barbeque Joints" by Southern Living, he now sources heirloom Berkshire and Red Wattle pork from Heritage Foods in New York.

Redemption's pizza menu features classic toppings, including Tempesta Artisan Salumi pepperoni, house-made sweet Italian sausage, ham, bacon, mushrooms, house-smoked meats and several varieties of

Virginia barbecue sauce. Specials such as deep-dish breakfast pizza also pop up from time to time. The pizzas take about an hour to make and are advance order only. Redemption also sells frozen Chicago-style take-and-bake pies. A 9-inch pizza yields four husky slices.

When the craving strikes, instead of heading to the airport, deep-dish devotees can take a trip to Redemption BBQ. **U**

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SPOTLIGHT

CARLOS ORDAZ-NUNEZ

The owner of TBT El Gallo shares a few of his favorite things

By Eileen Mellon



TUNE IN

"My guilty pleasure is watching sitcoms, especially family ones. I love the 'George Lopez' show, 'Modern Family,' 'Black-ish,' 'Abbott Elementary,' 'The League,' 'The Carmichael Show,' 'How I Met Your Mother.'"



EXTRACURRICULARS

"I love getting tattooed; shout-out to Scott Calcaterra at True Tattoo. I enjoy watching sports, especially the LA Chargers, and I try to see all my LA teams whenever they're close."



NEVER FORGET

"[Former Carver restaurant] The Black Sheep. I remember being a teenager with my friends, venturing into the city for the jerk chicken battleship after seeing it on 'Man vs. Food.' I still think about the Tar Pit, their chocolate creme brulee."



KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

"I'm a big snacker, so I keep limes, Tapatio hot sauce, cucumbers and Tajin on hand, Xochitl blue corn chips with some of my salsa or guac, and, of course, ice cream."



TBT 2.0

"At the new restaurant, we want to be authentic in our perspective as first-generation Mexican immigrants. My menu faves are the chicken wings with fermented hot honey Buffalo sauce and salsa blanca, the quesabirria tacos, and our shrimp tacos."



LOCAL LOVE

"Blackbyrd Goods' leather wallets; mine always gets compliments. Odd Bird is a vibe, and I love their selection of pantry items. Second Bottle always comes in clutch with the perfect bottle of wine. AR's Hot Honey for my pizza cravings, and I love Recluse Roasting Co. and Ryba's Pierogi."

CLOCKWISE FROM CENTER: ILLUSTRATION BY ABBY GIUSEPPE, COURTESY TAPATIO; COURTESY TBT EL GALLO; EILEEN MELLON; JAY PAUL; COURTESY CARLOS ORDAZ-NUNEZ; DISNEY/ABC ENTERTAINMENT

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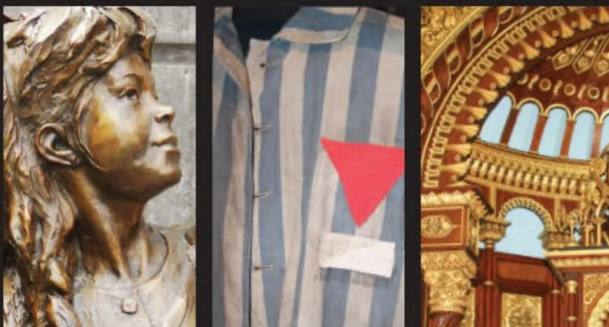
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Illustration done by: Eliza B. Askin

OPEN TAB

LAID-BACK

The dreamy, booze-free oasis that is KavaClub

By Bird Cox

Remy Ciuba
(left) and Fred
Bryant of
KavaClub



First Kiss at KavaClub

LOW-KEY NIGHTLIFE in a beautiful space is a rare find, but there's a gem in the heart of the Fan that offers exactly that; no drunken clowning, promise. Open since February 2024, KavaClub is a sober bar with clean, inviting, azure-lit vibes and a menu unique to Richmond. In addition to a slew of tropical mocktails and bar snacks, you can (now that the business has ironed out some issues with the Virginia Department of Health) sip kava—a calming, earthy ceremonial drink from the Pacific Islands made from the root of the kava plant—out of a coconut shell. We caught up with Remy Ciuba, creative and community director at KavaClub.

Richmond magazine: Tell me about introducing people to kava.

Remy Ciuba: Kava doesn't intoxicate you; it has a grounding, anxiety-lowering effect. It encourages relaxation, patience, focus and a break from cyclical thinking. We make it the traditional way, like it's made in Fiji—we get our kava from a farmer and his wife there directly. We're the only kava bar in the state, but there are more than 100 in Florida.

As for the flavor, it's very earthy, like brewed tea or matcha. Some people liken it to an unsweetened green juice. There's a slight numbing effect in the mouth and throat, almost like a gentle Sichuan pepper, but not spicy, and that lets you know it's a good product.

RM: What are some favorite mocktails?

Ciuba: The Big Island Breeze; I like preserved plum, or li hing, a lot. And we've kept the Spicy'r Season, a mango, jalapeno and pineapple blend, on the menu for many seasons. There are lots of tropical flavors on the menu; it leans into the environment that kava comes from.

RM: What else should people know?

Ciuba: This is a calm space where you can hang out at night. There are so few places where you can go without being confronted by alcohol. There's free pool, a community workshop space, lots of book club meetups and a lounge space. Even if you drink, you might just love the energy here. It's a departure from the usual scene.

PURVEYOR

Scared Cowboy

HISTORY: Ian Jovanovich first started making hot sauce at home for fun, gifting it to friends and family. Persuaded to start bottling and selling his "not-too-hot" sauces, he turned his hobby into a business and launched Scared Cowboy in May 2024. Joining him is friend and partner John DiJulio, who created the logo and assists with production. The pair met in college and currently work as graphic designers.

SPECIALTIES: Jovanovich and DiJulio produce four different sauces: orange, brown, green and red. The orange variety

uses fire-roasted tomatoes, which Jovanovich says, "provides a different flavor profile that you don't see very



often," and is recommended for pizza. The brown sauce has a sweeter, more tangy taste, while green is comparable to a

salsa verde and pairs well with Mexican food. The red sauce is the spiciest and incorporates citrus.

PRODUCTION: Scared Cowboy operates out of Hatch Kitchen. When making the sauces, they first begin with removing the majority of the seeds in the peppers to tame the heat and then roast vegetables until slightly charred. The ingredients are blended, seasoned and bottled by hand.

BUY: At Union Market or online at scaredcowboy.com.

—Alyssa Hutton



The breakfast
combo at Buna Kurs
Ethiopian Cafe

5 FAVES

FIRST UP

Seize the day with these healthy(-ish) breakfast options

By Genevelyn Steele

1 Breakfast Combo \$15.50 at Buna Kurs Ethiopian Cafe

This Jackson Ward cafe is known for hosting Ethiopian coffee ceremonies, but its hot breakfast deserves attention, too. Gracefully folded, tangy injera (spongy fermented flatbread) is a perfect vessel for scooping up tomato-y egg silsi, kinche (buttery cracked wheat) and fir fir (hunks of injera in a spicy sauce). Though coffee, or "buna," is in the shop's name, the honeyed keshir tea with ginger and orange juice makes for a sunny start to the day.

2 Avo-Smash \$9.95 at Baltik's Bagel

Open-faced, toasted and slathered with a chunky avocado spread, a housemade everything bagel lets pungent garlic do the talking for its accompanying seeds and spices. Baltik's avocado toast-meets-breakfast sandwich is misted with bright lemon juice and buttery EVOO, then topped with peppadew peppers and both pickled and crispy onion rings. While you're there, grab a dozen bagels for later.

3 Green Light \$12 at The Beet Box

Smoothie bowls can sometimes leave me wanting more, but not at VCU-adjacent The Beet Box, where they serve up a mountainous sundae of earthy, savory and sweet. The Green Light mixes matcha, spinach, pineapple, banana and almond milk into a creamy, soft serve-like support system for hunks of granola, strawberry, blueberry, pineapple, honey and coconut flakes.

4 Deli Bar \$10.99 per pound at Good Foods Grocery

The hot bar at Good Foods Grocery in Bon Air is open for breakfast, making it an easy grab-and-go option for hearty, healthy fare. Standouts include the daily frittatas, such as spinach, tomato and feta; herby potatoes; slices of turkey bacon; and maple-roasted peppers and onions. Don't sleep on wheatgrass shots or house-pressed juices and smoothies, which are ice-free and made with all organic ingredients.

5 Super Bowl \$11 at ShoreDog Cafe

Dig into an over-easy egg perched atop toasted quinoa in the gluten-free and protein-rich Super Bowl. Packed with color, it features a melt-in-your-mouth egg yolk that trembles over caramelized onions, charred kale, roasted heirloom tomatoes, and Parmesan or goat cheese. A warm mug of joe from Afterglow Coffee Cooperative completes a morning recharge.

50

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Tasha Dixon is head brewer of Ardent Craft Ales. Only about 11% of brewers in the United States are women.

IN DUE TIME

Ardent Craft Ales has a new brewer at its helm

By Eileen Mellon

A familiar face on the local beer scene for the past decade, Tasha Dixon recently scored her favorite gig to date: head brewer at Ardent Craft Ales. A lager lover, Dixon's first stint in the field was in college, pouring pints. Since then, she has climbed the ranks to become one of the few women in the state to achieve head brewer status. We chatted about inclusion in the industry, preferred suds and more.

Richmond magazine: Where are you from and how did you get into beer?

Tasha Dixon: I'm from Colonial Heights, but I've been hanging out in Richmond since I was 16 years old, and then I went to VCU. I studied criminology and was trying to get into law enforcement. In the meantime, I needed a job, and I saw that Triple Crossing, the downtown location, was hiring.

RM: Did you have any experience with beer or like beer?

Dixon: I love beer. I lived close to this place called

Trolley Mart, and they had a variety of craft beer. I used to drink PBR and Bud Lights at college parties. But then I was like, "I want to try something else." So, I started drinking wheat beers, and from there I went to IPAs, and then I went to lagers, and I was like, "Wait a minute, I really like this." So that's what piqued my interest in working for a brewery. That's when I changed my career path.

RM: What about that experience changed things?

Dixon: I worked for this company that pretty much just opened the doors, and I was a part of that,

which was exciting. The owners were still working their full-time jobs, and they would come in after 5 o'clock and then work the bar. I really admired their dedication. I was like, "I want to do good for these guys, I want to help them out in a way that they don't need to come in and work anymore." I think that's how I got to where I am now. I'm a very hard worker. I honestly never expected to get this far and to be here. I went a whole different route, and I actually found my calling.

RM: How did you make the switch to brewing?

Dixon: I was always trying to help out on the canning line. And if you've ever worked a can before, it's long and it's not fun, but I wanted to do it because I was getting closer to the back of the house, right there learning everything. That's when it clicked for me, like, "I think I want to be back here instead of up there." Later, I saw that Ardent was actually hiring a brewer, and I reached out. I started just in their cellar. I had no expectations when I joined this industry over a decade ago, and it's surreal thinking that I'm now in that role.

RM: Is there a certain brewing style that you feel drawn to?

Dixon: If you ask any brewer what style they like, it's going to be a lager. I love that style. I love the brewing technique for it. I love the history of lager. Everything about it: it's clean, crisp, the drinkability. One of the first beers that I brewed here was our Atlantico [lager].

RM: Can we talk about your involvement with the Pink Boots Society?

Dixon: We've got a nice little chapter here in Richmond. Pink Boots is there to encourage, assist and inspire [women and] nonbinary people in the fermented beverage industry. We create inclusive spaces for everybody. There's a lot of mentorships, a lot of scholarships. I was awarded the Yakima Hop Industry scholarship and got to go out to Yakima, Washington. It changed everything for me. We went to the breweries that were women led; we went to the hop breeding programs that were women led. I never felt safer in those spaces. That was a life-changing trip for me. It's empowered me so much because I came back and I have these fresh perspectives, I have fresh ideas, and I'm ready to get back to work.

RM: Outside of beer, what do you like to do in your free time?

Dixon: I love live music and traveling, so you might catch me outside of Virginia. Honestly, I just love exploring, being active, hiking, doing all that. I try not to make beer my entire personality. **RM**

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

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BY EILEEN MELLON

INSIDER

Tales From the Cart

Local dining industry players share their takes on shopping at international grocery wonderland Lotte Plaza Market

By Eileen Mellon

BRENNAN GRIFFITH

Founder and chef, Nam Prik Pao pop-up

Favorite items to shop for: "Ground pork. You can tell they do the process right, where the meat comes out more like pieces that have been cut small."

Recent impulse purchase: "The barbecue chicken spot in the food court. I needed a quick dinner before heading home, and bb.q Chicken whipped up the crispiest, crunchiest Korean fried chicken I've ever had. We got their honey garlic flavor. Even the next day after being refrigerated, it still had that crunch."

Unexpected find: "Containers for fermenting/pickling."

They come with an insert in the container that holds all the vegetables below the brine inside the container."

Best part about shopping there: "Variety of produce. It saves me from having to bounce around different stores and has been consistently top-tier fresh."

Food court or bakery? "See above answer [about bb.q Chicken]."

LEAH BRANCH

Executive chef, The Roosevelt

Favorite items to shop for: "I'm mainly in the condiment section for fried chiles in oil, all the vinegar and seaweed snacks."

Recent impulse purchase: "I can't resist the grape Kasugai gummies."

Unexpected find: "There's a sizable Indian food section. It's worth checking out the spices and grabbing some

chaat supplies."

Best part about shopping there:

"The variety of products is really nice, especially the produce section. The playlist isn't bad, either."

Food court or bakery?

"I'm always down to try something from the food court. The kimchi pancake is crazy."

CHRISTINE WANSLEBEN

Founder and instructor,

Mise En Place cooking school

Favorite items to shop for: "I've shopped for my entire sushi class at Lotte, from rolling mats to pickled ginger to roasted eel. Both my kids like the frozen tteokbokki, the fresh kimbap and crispy shrimp skewers from the prepared section."

Recent impulse purchase: "They have ginger-honey tea in a jar, and I love the instant Vietnamese coffee; it's hard not to walk out with something."

Unexpected find: "My kids have gotten faux Crocs from there."

Best part about shopping there:

"If I need Indian ingredients, I can go there, and they have all the presliced meats if you wanted to make your own bulgogi at home. They have rewards, too."

Food court or bakery? "Bakery for the red bean bun — delish."



PIYUSH 'PI' JESSANI

Owner, Pi's Coffee

Favorite items to shop for: "Mostly veggies, meat and seafood. The selection is one of the more diverse amongst the other

Asian grocers in the area, which makes shopping easier with it being a one-stop shop."

Recent impulse purchase: "Pokemon plushies; it's an impulse buy every time I'm there. Gotta catch 'em all, right?"

Unexpected find: "A whole slew of Indian snacks and cookies that I couldn't find since moving to Richmond."

Best part about shopping there: "Being able to run through the aisles and see little windows into the different cultures and be inspired to create something new and fun by the time I get home."

Food court or bakery? "Bb.q Chicken is my guilty pleasure. And the boba and Korean pancakes there are pretty good, too." 



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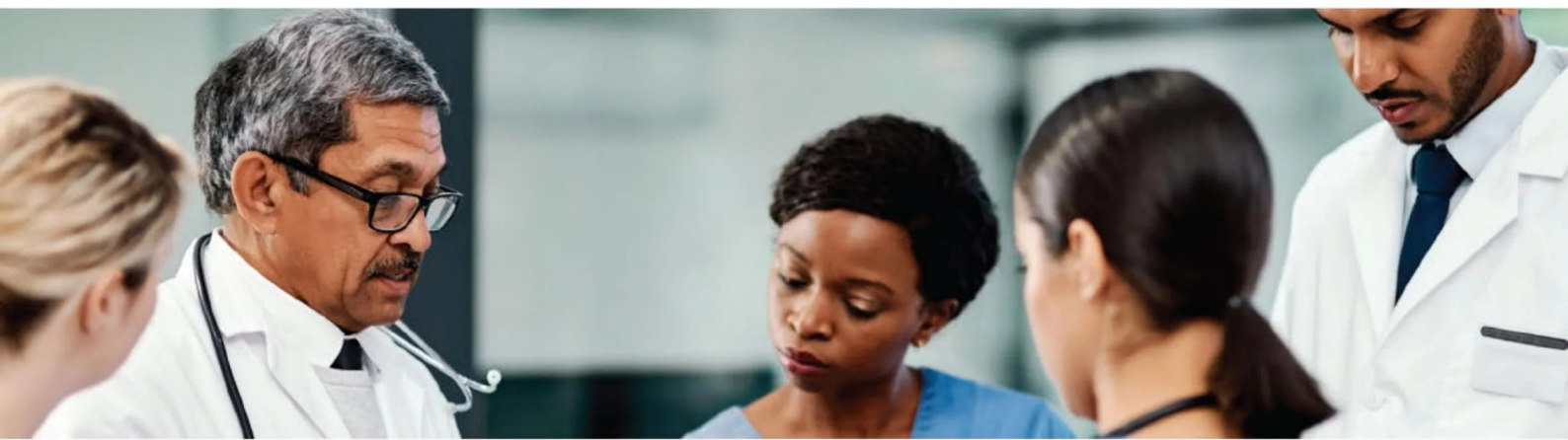
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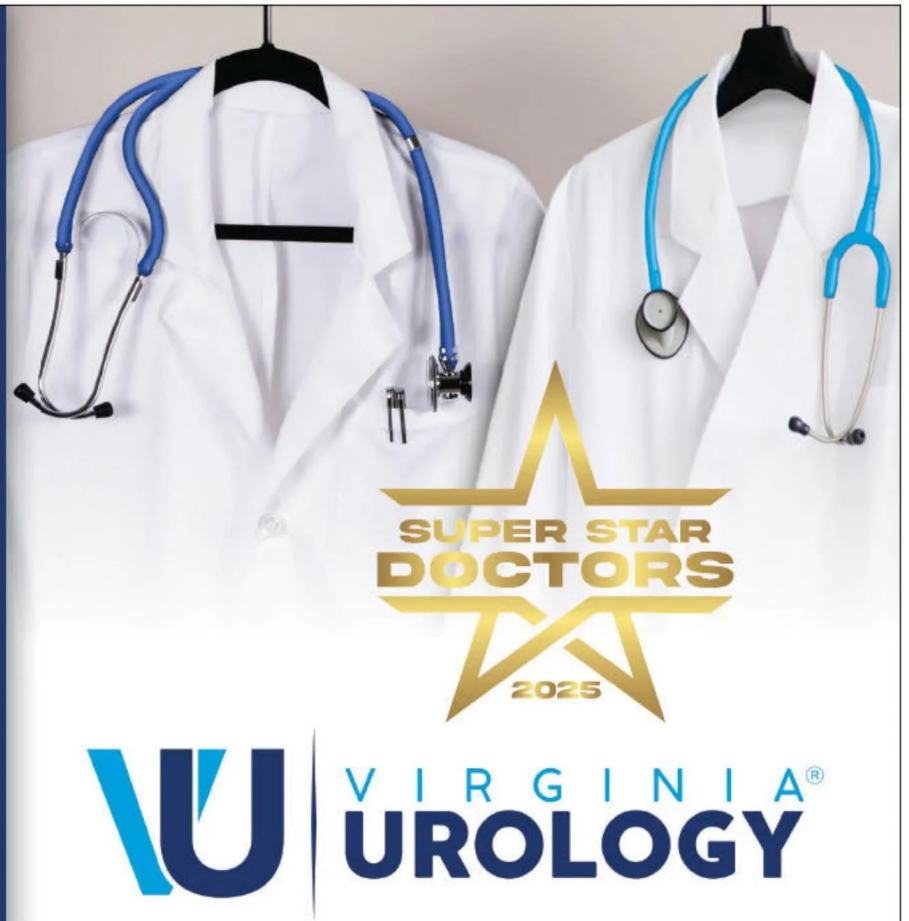
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HEALTHY DEVELOPMENTS

Access to imaging degrees expands, OrthoVirginia opens a new Midlothian clinic, virtual care for youth anxiety comes to Virginia, and a nonprofit educates and enriches PTs

EDUCATION

A Bright Future

Education and health care join forces to fill a gap in Richmond

By Alyssa Hutton

In October 2024, the American Society of Radiologic Technologists shared a warning: Radiology technologists are becoming harder to find at medical facilities around the country, despite a high demand for imaging services at all levels of medical care. The shortage has many causes, but its biggest, and perhaps most curable, is access to education.

In an effort to turn the tide locally, HCA Virginia and Brightpoint Community College have formed a partnership that will create the first radiologic technology degree program of its type in the Richmond area, based out of HCA's Chippenham Hospital.

The two-year program will allow students to earn an associate's degree in radiology, a requirement for most entry-level positions, complete clinical rotation training and take the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists exam, which certifies and registers technologists in radiography. Twenty students are currently enrolled and are expected to graduate in May 2026, according to Bill Fiege, president of Brightpoint Community College.

"We're excited to partner with HCA specifically for this program and all of

our business and industry partners to help them meet their workforce needs and demands to help our community," Fiege says. "Community is our middle name, and so our job is to be sure we're providing the training programs that support community needs, and that's what we're doing."

Fiege shares that his hope is for students to complete the program and work in the Richmond area as radiologic technologists.

HCA is investing just under \$3 million for the program, with funds going toward faculty salaries, scholarships, renovations and equipment to create a new 3,000-square-foot learning environment at Chippenham's Jahnke Road facility. Improvements at the hospital include a patient care lab, X-ray labs, classrooms and a faculty wing. HCA also assisted with developing the curriculum and recruiting faculty.

The exposure to real-life experiences and scholarship support will help students access jobs in the field in the future, says Yvette Dorsey, associate vice president of academic affairs for HCA.

"It is truly about workforce development, career pathway development in the state of Virginia and how can we be the clinical leader, the clinical partner of choice, the clinical organization that's going to lead that charge and really find something that is sustainable that is going to give people an option and entry into health care and have affordable education such as Brightpoint to be able to do that," Dorsey says. ■



Professor Geneva Flexon rehearses a procedure with radiology students.



OrthoVirginia's new Midlothian facility

FACILITIES

UNDER ONE ROOF

A new orthopedic care facility opens in Midlothian

By Melody Yuan

After two years of planning and construction, OrthoVirginia cut the ribbon on a new care unit at Watkins Centre, across from Westchester Commons shopping mall, in September 2024. The more than 77,000-square-foot building has two stories, features 96 exam rooms, offers full-service physical and hand therapy, and has four operatories.

"It's really about the access in the area," says William Clinton, executive director of central and east regions for OrthoVirginia. "Everything is housed under one building, from diagnosis to surgery to follow-up." The goal of the building is to provide a comprehensive space for patients to get all their

musculoskeletal care without having to visit multiple offices.

Interior details were carefully considered, too, according to Clinton. Exam rooms are located far from the reception area to ensure privacy, and the building is painted in soothing blues and grays. With this project providing forward momentum, OrthoVirginia is already looking to add more providers and therapists to the facility.

The company's move to centralize its care comes as Chesterfield outpaces all other Virginia counties in population growth; OrthoVirginia has already moved two office locations, at HCA's Johnston-Willis hospital and Bon Secours' St. Francis Medical Center, to Westchester. ■

WELLNESS

Middle Ground

A new virtual program offers personalized treatment for anxiety and OCD

Aiming to create a safe space where kids with anxiety can feel comfortable, many medical professionals have eliminated office visits and instead are meeting patients in a familiar place: the internet.

Launching the new model in Virginia last August, nationwide

provider InStride Health offers novel care for children, teenagers and young adults struggling with anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorder entirely remotely, through virtual visits, chats and phone calls.

After InStride accepts a patient's application, the patient is assigned a dedicated three-person care team, made up of a psychiatrist, therapist and exposure coach, along with a personalized treatment plan.

"It's all going to depend on who you're meeting with," says InStride Virginia Territory Manager Sally

Snead. Mild cases of OCD or anxiety, Snead says, might see two hours of meetings per week, and more severe cases may see five. The practice's care is based on the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy.

Weekly sessions for a typical program run for four to 12 months and have a set end date, in contrast to psychiatric offerings intended to continue into adulthood. Session activities might include the practice of "self-coaching" through anxiety or OCD-provoking moments with an exposure coach. —MY



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DEVELOPMENT

MOVING FORWARD

A nonprofit expands specialty education for physical therapists

By Jenna Lapp

Walking into the offices of Lawrence Rehabilitation - The Gait Center on Staples Mill Road, it's not hard to see the measure of the facility's impact. The walls are covered with stories of incredible comebacks, including the first amputee to complete the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii and a high school football quarterback who was the first in the nation to play with a lower-limb prosthesis.

The stories all highlight patients whom David Lawrence, founder and clinic owner of Lawrence Rehabilitation - The Gait Center has helped in his years as a physical therapist specializing in



From left: David Lawrence, Mission Gait Foundation founder and CEO, and Robin Yoder, director of patient reintegration

mobility rehabilitation. Since founding the practice in 2006, Lawrence has been focused on more than just patients. After launching the Mission Gait Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with his wife, Carolyn, in 2016, he set a goal to better educate physical therapists and caregivers around the world on gait rehabilitation.

"The project is to create a certification for gait assessment and gait training that should be standard practice in the United States," Lawrence says. "Right now, believe it or not, that does not exist."

About 23 million people in the United States suffer from gait disabilities, yet physical therapists rarely receive specialized education about treatment for gait issues. The lack of available care inspired the foundation to launch the education-focused Mission Gait Academy. In May 2024, the academy introduced a new level of its certification course, which provides comprehensive training for

physical therapists and assistants. It also puts them in a database designed to connect patients experiencing gait dysfunction with qualified care.

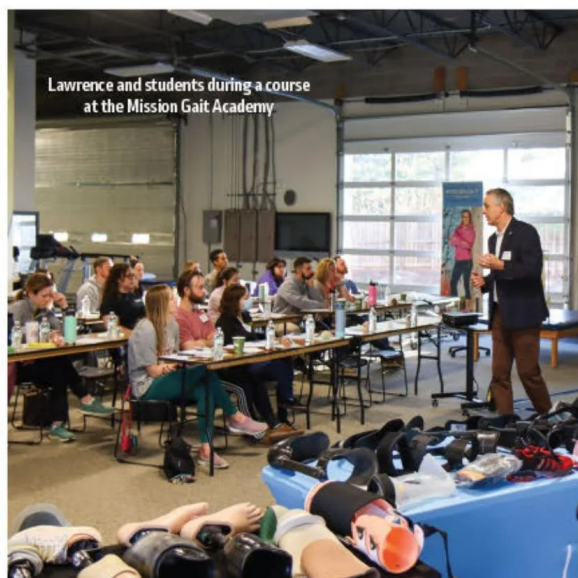
The academy offers certification courses for rehabilitation professionals in person and virtually.

Robin Yoder, a member of Mission Gait's board, is a cancer survivor and unilateral above-knee amputee.

"Every one of us who lives with these challenges deserves the opportunity to have access to the necessary resources," Yoder says, "and to develop the skills to live and to experience this wonderful world with confidence, curiosity and joy outside the therapeutic arena."

To achieve its mission, the Mission Gait Foundation also focuses on reintegrating patients into daily life. Its Walking Free program brings prosthetic and orthotic rehabilitation to underprivileged areas around the world.

As for the groundbreaking certification course, Lawrence hopes that by the time his work is finished, it will be standard practice. "I would like to have it, by 2036, be part of the American Physical Therapy Association paradigm of how we train people," Lawrence says. "That's our goal." ■



Lawrence and students during a course at the Mission Gait Academy



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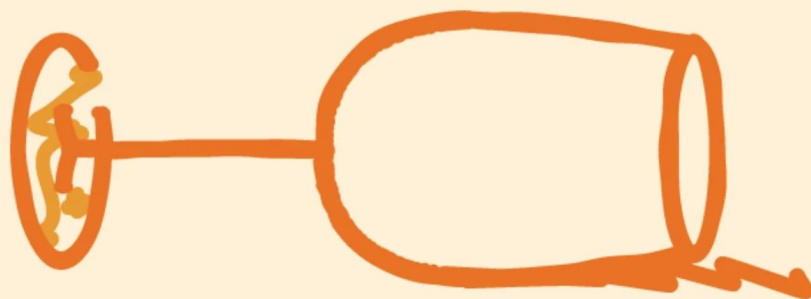
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A Movement of **MODERATION**

Recent findings on alcohol consumption may affect drinking habits for a generation

By Claire Fortier

From pouring “liquid courage” or offering the “hair of the dog” to announcing, “It’s 5 o’clock somewhere,” socially acceptable invitations to imbibe are legion. However, spurred by a slew of new information on alcohol’s role in short- and long-term health concerns, sobriety — or at least mindful drinking — might soon replace spirits as the way to end a long day.

Sobering Statistics

Although overall alcohol consumption has remained relatively consistent in the U.S. since 1988, alcohol-related deaths have skyrocketed in more recent

years. Since 2018, Virginia has seen a 10% increase in alcohol consumption but a 50% increase in alcohol-related deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“The number of deaths associated with alcohol has increased substantially over the last decade, particularly during the pandemic,” says Dr. Michael Miles, director at Virginia Commonwealth University’s Alcohol Research Center. “The number of deaths from alcohol are much greater than from opioids, for example.”

The VCU Alcohol Research Center, one of 20 such centers around the country funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, is work-

ing to map the networks of genes contributing to alcohol use disorder. Alcoholism and alcohol abuse are a major public health issue contributing to 88,000 deaths a year and an estimated \$249 billion in lost productivity, health care expenses and crime.

But a glass or two of red wine every day is good for you, right? It lowers your risk from coronary disease, doesn’t it?

No, says the World Health Organization. In a statement posted last January in *The Lancet Public Health*, WHO flatly stated that “when it comes to alcohol consumption, there is no safe amount that does not affect health. Alcohol causes at least seven types of cancer ... >



which means that any beverage containing alcohol, regardless of its price and quality, poses a risk of developing cancer."

"Does that mean having one drink on a weekend is going to give you cancer? Absolutely not," Miles says. "Over the course of a 70-year lifetime, would it increase your risk for coming up with a particular type of cancer? It might to some degree. It depends upon other factors as well. So, that's the tradeoff we all go through in our lives.

"People can make a choice in their own lives. If they decide they enjoy the social aspects of alcohol, like periodically with dinner or with family and friends, that's one thing. But they need to know, particularly if they are drinking more excessively, that it does have a risk for certain diseases."

A Demographic Shift

It appears that young adults are getting the message.

According to a long-term measure of alcohol consumption from Gallup, some 60% of Americans consider themselves "occasional drinkers," a statistic that hasn't budged much in four decades but has reached a high in the last four years,

due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the demographics of drinkers are shifting. According to the same poll, fewer than 4 out of 10 young adults (ages 18-34) currently consider themselves regular drinkers; 20 years ago, members of that age group were the most likely to be regular drinkers. At the same time, older adults, particularly those 55 and older, have gone from being the least likely to the most likely to drink regularly.

The perception of drinking has changed, too. According to 2024 Gallup research, 52% of young adults believe that even moderate drinking is bad for your health, compared to 34% five years prior. There has been a 13% increase in middle-aged adults who believe any type of drinking is bad for you, but opinions are largely unchanged among those 55 and older.

"In general, people have become more aware of the adverse effects of alcohol on their health over the last number of years and are moderating their drinking more," Dr. Miles says.

The statistics bear out on the street, according to Jody Sidle, the owner of Point 5, a spirit-free bottle shop in

Carytown. "Obviously not across the board, but we are seeing younger people opting not to drink as much as previous generations," Sidle says. "The younger generation is more health conscious, not as interested in drinking. They seem to want to stay more present."

"Staying present" is important to a generation whose indiscretions are splashed across social media. According to market research from creative agency Red Brick Road, 49% of today's teens and 20-somethings have admitted that their social media image is constantly on their minds. Knowing that their lives are on display for their friends, family and employers has led 76% of Gen Z adults to believe it's important to be in control of all aspects of their lives, according to Red Brick Road — an inclination that dovetails with findings from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism showing that growing up in uncertain and acrimonious times has made this cohort of kids more risk averse.

New Options

Does pairing sobering science with health consciousness and risk aversion translate into teetotaling young adults?

Not necessarily. While Gen Zers and millennials have demonstrably reduced their alcohol intake, they're not forgoing intoxication entirely.

Replacing alcohol with marijuana — behavior known as “California sober” — has taken off as more states have legalized marijuana and cannabis-infused products. Marijuana use has almost doubled in adults ages 18-34 since 2013, when Gallup first started asking Americans about their usage, rising 11 points to 25% between 2021 and 2023 alone. Usage among middle-aged adults has grown from 4% to 17%.

“Weed is readily available, and it's cheaper,” says Teryl Main, a bartender at West Coast Provisions in Short Pump, voicing common reasons for choosing cannabis over alcohol.

“You can just put it in a smoothie. Weed is not spinach, but it's not the poison that alcohol is,” says Becca Hyman, a fellow bartender at West Coast Provisions.

Many believe cannabis is a healthier, and therefore more acceptable, choice than alcohol. For regular marijuana users, cannabis has been linked to a 1.37% increase in the likelihood of developing

schizophrenia, according to a 2017 study reported in *Molecular Psychiatry*, but those chances increase for adolescents who are regular users. However, consuming alcohol over long periods of time can lead to a long list of health problems, from liver disease to heart and digestive issues, pancreatitis, erectile dysfunction, and infertility. According to Healthline, a health information website, “Weed seems to have fewer long-term risks than alcohol, but again, there's a huge discrepancy in the amount of research on weed compared with alcohol.”

No matter their age, most Americans haven't turned to marijuana, but declining a doobie doesn't always mean embracing complete abstinence. A “sober-curious” lifestyle can involve drinking or even drug use; the goal isn't strict sobriety so much as changing the dominance of drinking in social interactions, particularly among youth. The sober curious may be concerned about the health or social impacts of alcohol without wanting to give up drinking altogether.

“A big portion of our customers are sober curious,” Sidle says of patrons at Point 5. “They are playing with the idea. They are trying different things, and

they are seeing how it sits. How is it going to impact and change their lifestyles? How is it going to fit in?”

“Eighty percent of our shoppers are drinkers, and they are trying to be more mindful about their drinking,” Sidle adds. “They are looking for alternatives. They still want to have something more complex and delicious in the evening, but something that doesn't have alcohol. They just want to switch it up.”

To that end, Sidle stocks dozens of varieties of nonalcoholic mixers meant to replicate the experience of spirits such as gin, bourbon and tequila without the intoxication. They can be used in traditional recipes or mixed with bitters and shrubs to create elevated nonalcoholic craft cocktails well beyond the typical “mocktail.” Sidle also carries ranges of nonalcoholic wine and beer, as well as canned cocktails infused with cannabis, CBD and botanicals such as mushrooms.

And Point 5 is far from the only local source for the sober curious. Ceremony Dry Bottle Shop has locations inside the Painted Tree Boutiques in Midlothian and Glen Allen, and well-known bottle shops including Corks & Kegs and Barrel Thief carry nonalcoholic wine. Kava-Club's beverages, made from the root of the kava plant, “offer a calming experience without impairing cognitive function or motor skills.” Breweries and distilleries such as Three Notch'd and Virago Spirits offer nonalcoholic options, too.

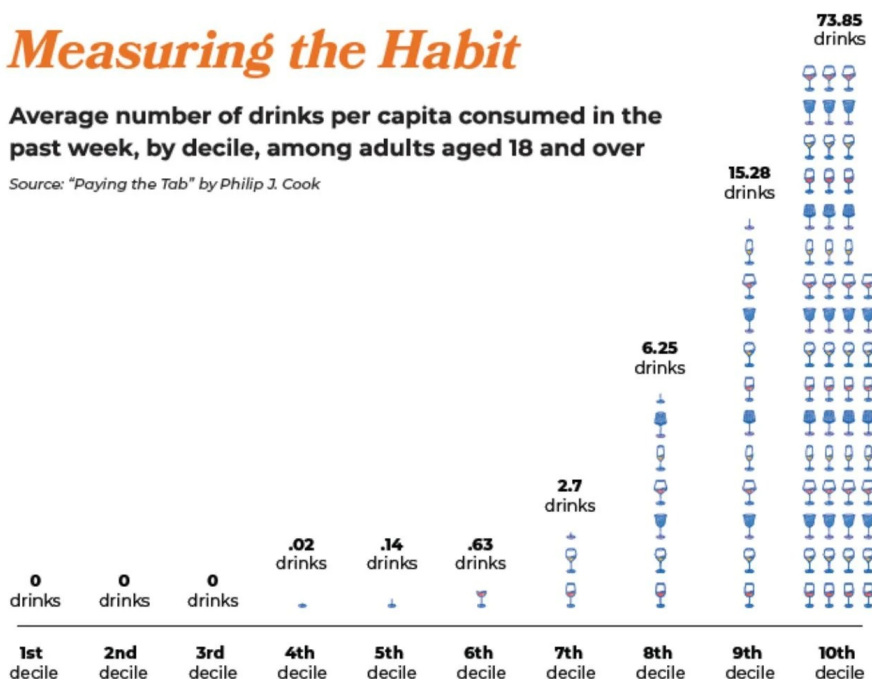
Some bars and restaurants are leaning in on the sober-curious movement, incorporating faux cocktails into their menus and offering entertainment alternatives, such as group games and community-focused events, that take the attention away from drinking without losing the social element of the bar. The Park, which offers duckpin bowling and virtual golf, and Bingo Beer, which has arcade games and skeeball, offer more than just cold brews and craft cocktails.

So, while it may be 5 o'clock somewhere, that no longer mandates a tall glass of something strong, as socializing without swilling gives new meaning to a common toast: Here's to your health. ■

Measuring the Habit

Average number of drinks per capita consumed in the past week, by decile, among adults aged 18 and over

Source: “Paying the Tab” by Philip J. Cook





From left: Faith Ghivizzani, Jean Todd and Mercedes Ashworth at the partial hospitalization program in Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital

Meeting the Next Generation's Needs

New and upgraded programs attempt to match the demand for youth mental health services

By Paula Peters Chambers

Adolescents are special — just ask any parent who's lived with a child through puberty and the teenage years. Emotions can run high or be curiously flat. Conversations range from logical and reasoned to bafflingly nonlinear. Friend groups either are superior to parents in every way or present a minefield of social interactions.

Here's the often overlooked truth: Just as adolescents' bodies are changing, so are their brains. The difference is that many physical developments are outwardly visible, while the brain's evolution is hidden, revealed in behavior and emotion.

It's during this time when behavioral health care needs can be greatest. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regularly assesses the well-being of teens through its annual, nationwide Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Looking at students in high school — grades 9 through 12 — the CDC found that 30% of teens had "persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness" in 2013; the prevalence rose to 40% in 2023. In 2023, the CDC also found that 20% of students surveyed had "seriously" considered attempting suicide, while 9% had attempted it. "These data bring into focus the level of distress many students

are experiencing," the report states.

But where there's cause for concern, there's also care to be found. Locally, adolescents experiencing serious mental health issues have more options for care than they did just a year ago, thanks to new services around the region including a partial hospitalization program at Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital in Richmond's West End, an adolescent Crisis Receiving Center at St. Joseph's Villa in Henrico County and an adolescent assessment center at Tucker Pavilion, home of HCA Chippenham Hospital's mental health services. Another adolescent PHP, via VCU Health's department of child and adolescent psychiatry, will open this month, with a second unit set for a summer 2025 opening.

Taking Stock

"Behavioral health is learning how to be human, simply understanding how our behaviors and emotions impact us," says Mercedes Ashworth, manager of Bon Secours' Adolescent Behavioral Health Partial Hospitalization Program. "It sounds obvious, but we're not always taught how to think about how we're feeling and how to effectively communicate that."

Mental health support for teens can look similar to that for adults: visits with clinical providers such as therapists,

counselors and psychiatrists who can prescribe medication, if deemed necessary. If extensive treatment is needed, a hospital stay might be recommended. In the middle of the care spectrum fall PHPs, which allow participants to attend intensive therapy Monday through Friday, following hours that roughly mimic a work or school day. The benefit of PHPs, experts agree, is that they allow participants the chance to feel present in their "normal" lives.

"A partial hospitalization program is a beautiful [treatment] hybrid," says Jean Todd, Bon Secours' clinical director for behavioral health. "As a parent, you want to do anything to not hospitalize your child. [With the PHP], we can get kids treatment and let them go home at night safely."

Bon Secours' program launched in January 2024, welcoming youth ages 12 through 17 in cohort groups of no more than eight who agree to stay at least four weeks. Participants meet at the St. Mary's unit — which is filled with hand-painted murals, colorful artwork and "Chillville," a room for quiet retreat — Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with lunch and snacks provided. Teens have group therapy sessions daily; one-on-one and family therapy sessions are held weekly. A psychiatrist helps manage medications, and home- ➤

bound educators assist with school assignment coordination.

Participants may come to the program via a therapist's recommendation, an inpatient hospitalization or a visit to the emergency room where the right amount of help is determined. "We offer wrap-around support with a program that provides structure and mimics the school day," Ashworth says. "We do a lot of work to prepare patients for their return to home [full time]."

"Kids get support from one another," says Faith Ghivizzani, a therapist within the program. "They can struggle [individually] and still support one another at the same time. It does wonders for them. They also see how someone else can be carrying a lot and is still able to support them."

Expanding Options

Conversations about adding an adolescent PHP at Bon Secours began at least four years ago. "We had been referring [patients] to PHP programs that had wait lists," Ashworth says. "After COVID, we really started brainstorming [about starting our own PHP]."

Seeing the same need, in 2021 VCU Health began to hire additional staff to

expand its mental services for teens.

"Mental health, in general, over time, hasn't been well funded," says Dr. Jarrod Leffler, chair of the health network's division of child and adolescent psychology. "That's the starting point. Then you have an international pandemic. Kids are removed from their daily routines ... then anxiety and depressive symptoms are enhanced, and [teens] are isolated; they don't have a teacher, coach or counselor to turn to. And their parents are trying to work, too. For kids, it was extremely difficult."

Dr. Ekaterina Stepanova, chair of child and adolescent psychiatry, says inpatient stays are designed for youth who may be at risk of hurting themselves or others. But once stabilized, those patients need other options. "As soon as they're ready to step down to a lower level of service, that's the goal," she says. "Kids should not be in the hospital, because it's really hard for them to be away from their families. There's so much need in the community for these types of step-down programs."

There's indication that VCU Health's adolescent PHP, which will be housed at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children on Sherwood Avenue, will function

“*Kids should not be in the hospital, because it's really hard for them to be away from their families. There's so much need in the community for these types of step-down programs.*”

—Dr. Ekaterina Stepanova,
chair of child and adolescent psychiatry
at VCU

similar to Bon Secours St. Mary's program; the two providers have already been communicating. "This will help kids get out the hospital more quickly," Stepanova says. "And for kids who come through the ER side, not all of them need to be admitted as inpatients but end up there because that's all we have. [Once it opens,] they can go into the partial hospitalization program instead."

Last summer, St. Joseph's Villa in Lakeside added an adolescent Crisis Receiving Center alongside its adolescent Crisis Stabilization Unit, which opened in May 2012 — the first of its kind in the state. The CSU, which is operated in partnership with Richmond Behavioral Health Authority Region 4, has eight beds for youth ages 5 through 17 who are experiencing a mental health crisis. The maximum allowable stay is 15 days. Much like other PHP settings, the CSU is designed to keep kids out of hospitals.

"A hospital has a stigma attached, [sending the message] 'I'm sick,'" notes Linda Saltonstall, St. Joseph's Villa's senior clinical director. "What has made us stand out is that we really do family work. ... We meet with families at least three times during the visit, with the goal of getting families to start commu-



From left: Employees Faith Ghivizzani, Patrick Nicolas and Gianna Barone in "Chillville," a room at the youth hospitalization program in St. Mary's Hospital



Drs. Jarrod Lefler (left) and Ekaterina Stepanova are involved with bringing VCU Health's adolescent PHPs online this year.

nicating in a better way.”

The Crisis Receiving Center opened in April 2024 to offer emergency room services specifically targeted to adolescent mental health. “You can just go and walk in — like an ER — but you can only stay [at the CRC] for 23 hours,” Saltonstall says. “I always say that CRC is like CSU but on steroids, because they do all the same things — clinical, nursing and psychiatric assessments — but faster.”

Most often, youth who come to the CRC for help are able to return home with a plan to find additional community resources and support, Saltonstall says. “In the worst-case scenario, where a kid needs a hospital, at least we can give them immediate intervention responding to the crisis,” Saltonstall says, noting that research indicates teens benefit most from intervention when a response to a mental health crisis is swift. “There’s no wrong door,” she adds.

Saltonstall credits a previous St. Joseph’s Villa staffer for initially proposing the CRC, which is now operated in a fiscal partnership with Henrico County

with additional support from the state. “I’m a big believer in public-private partnerships; they’re win-win,” Saltonstall says. “Henrico County and RBHA Region 4 are great to work with.”

St. Joseph’s Villa also refers patients to HCA Chippenham’s Tucker Pavilion, which has adolescent partial hospitalization and intensive outpatient programs. The Tucker Assessment Center opened in October, offering evaluation to determine the best level of care needed.

According to Joy Singh, director of outpatient behavioral health services for HCA Chippenham Hospital, referrals are coming from community health and wellness providers, as well as local schools, crisis centers and community service boards. Families may also call the center directly (804-483-1331).

Making the Call

The Richmond Behavioral Health Authority is a governmental agency licensed by the state to provide services for mental health, intellectual disabilities, and substance abuse and prevention

services within the city of Richmond. Additionally, RBHA supports community service boards throughout Region 4, which includes the city of Richmond and counties of Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico and Powhatan, along with numerous other communities in Central and south-Central Virginia.

“Some people aren’t aware of what we can do here and all the services we can offer,” says Kristen Scott, program manager for RBHA’s Rapid Access program, outpatient therapy and psychological services. “Many times, it turns out we’re not the right spot, but we can reach out and connect [people] with all of those services,” Skapars adds.

Saltonstall of St. Joseph’s Villa acknowledges the challenges parents face in raising teens. “We all judge ourselves based on how our kids are doing,” she says, “But there’s no rule book, and there’s no shame in asking for help. For all the bravado that kids express, they’re terrified inside. They want somebody to be brave and wrap their arms around them, not to take control, but to help.” ■



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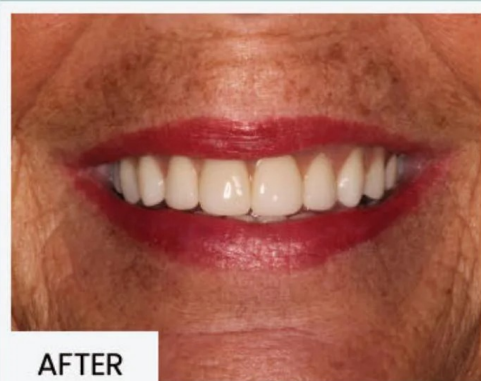
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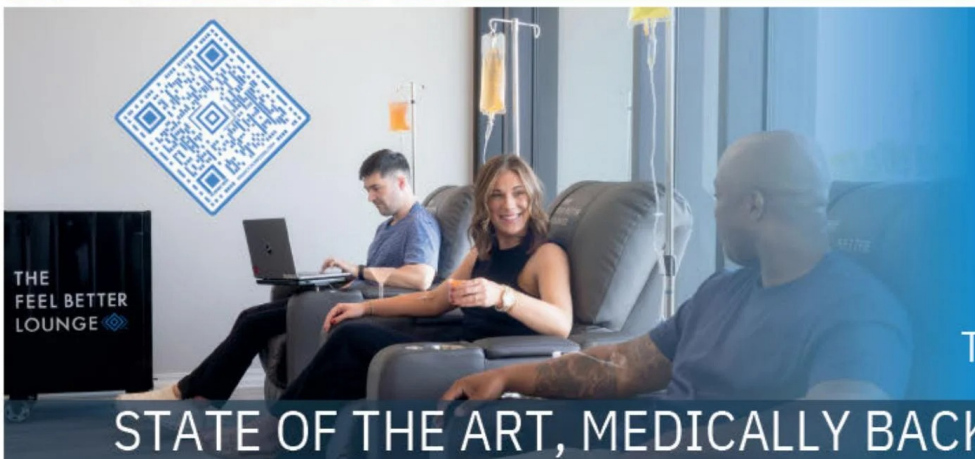
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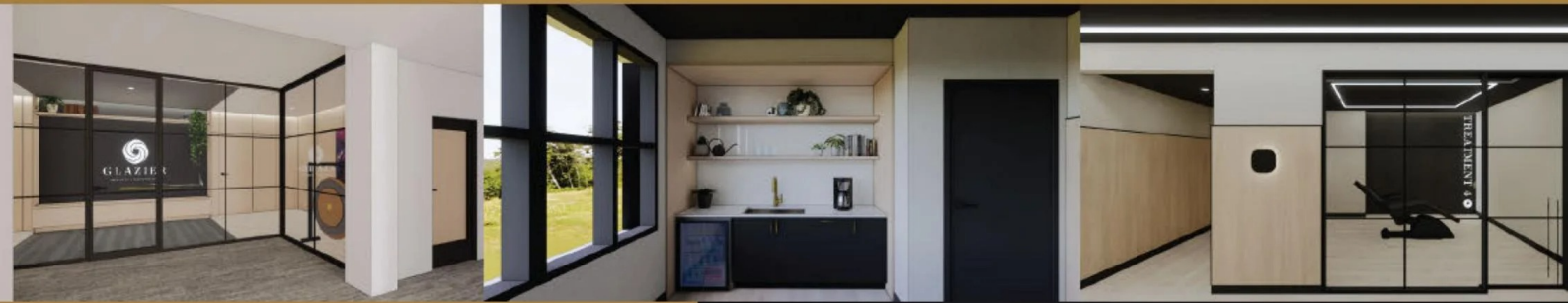
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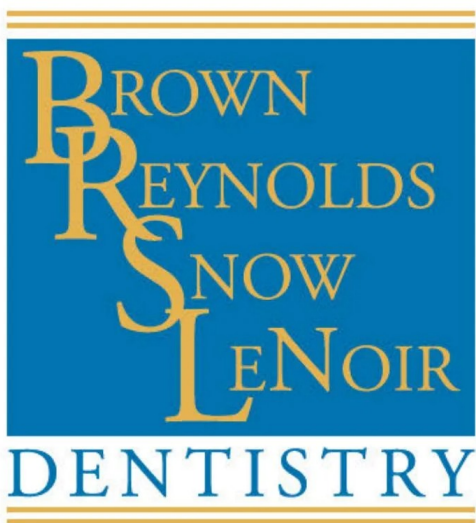
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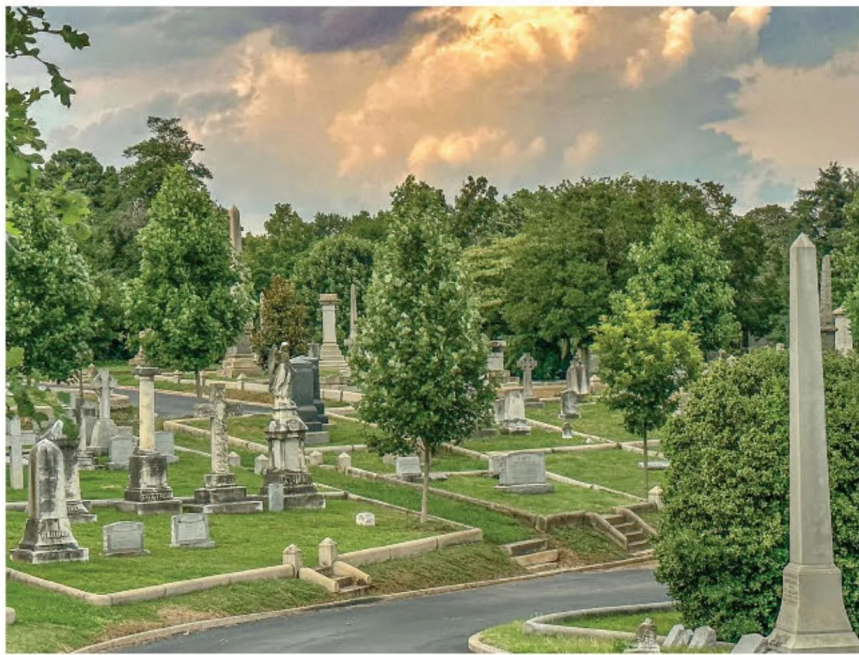
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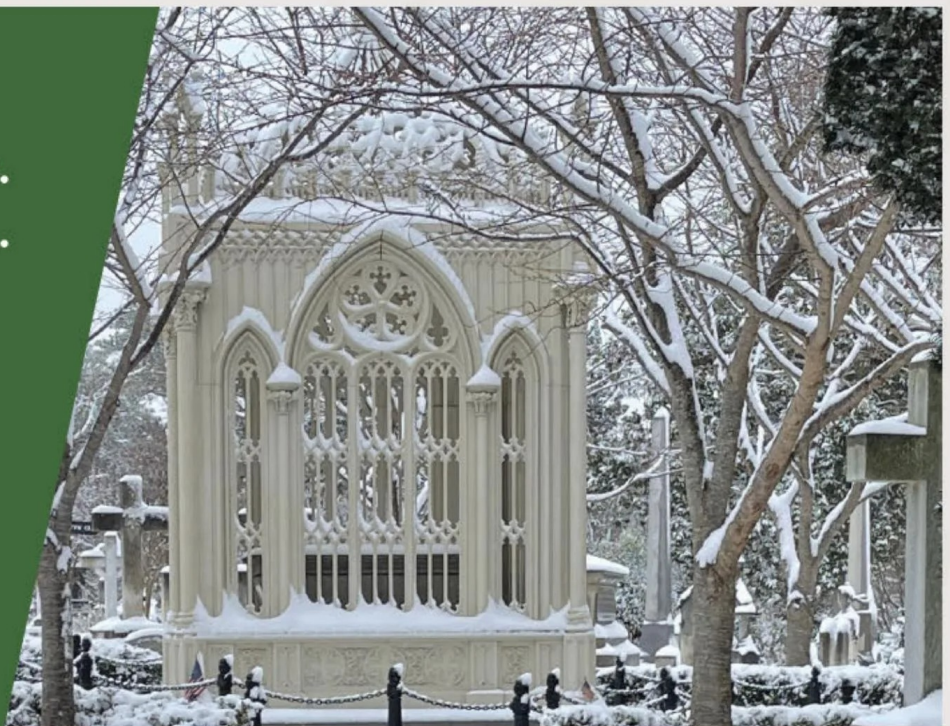
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HOSPITALS

	Birthing Center	Cardiac Catheterization	Organ Transplants	Research/Teaching Hospital	Specialty ICUs	Palliative Care	Rooms/Beds	Obstetrics/ Gynecology Ward Center	Oncology Cancer	Burn/Wound Unit	Rehab Services	Trauma Designation
Bon Secours Memorial Regional Medical Center 8260 Atlee Road, 804-764-6000 or bonsecours.com	✓	✓	✗	✓	CCU, CVICU, NICU, IVICU, PCU	✓	269 beds	✓	✓	✓ outpatient wound unit	✓	✗
Bon Secours Richmond Community Hospital 1500 N. 28th St., 804-225-1700 or bonsecours.com	✗	✗	✗	✗	PCU	✓	104 beds, 40 behavioral health unit beds	✗	✓	✓ inpatient wound care	✓	✗
Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center 13710 St. Francis Blvd., 804-594-7300 or bonsecours.com	✓	✓	✗	✓	ICU, NICU	✓	185 beds	✓	✓	✓ outpatient wound unit and inpatient wound care	✓	✗
Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital 5801 Brema Road, 804-285-2011 or bonsecours.com	✓	✓	✗	✓	CCU, CVICU, PICU, ICU, NICU, IMCU, CVSU, NSTU	✓	391 beds, 32 behavioral health unit beds	✓	✓	✓ outpatient wound unit and inpatient wound services	✓	✗
Bon Secours Southside Medical Center 200 Medical Park Blvd., Petersburg, 804-765-5000 or bonsecours.com	✓	✓	✗	✗	CVICU, NICU, ICU, PCU	✓	300 beds, 31 behavioral health unit beds	✓	✓	✓ outpatient wound unit and inpatient wound care	✓	III
Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU 1000 E. Broad St., 804-828-CHOR or chrichmond.org	✗	✓	✓	✓	NICU, PICU	✓	included in VCU Medical Center count	✗	✓	✓	✓	pediatric I
Chippenham Hospital 7101 Jahnke Road, 804-483-0000 or chippenhammed.com	✓	✓	✗	✗ [†]	BICU, PICU, PCU, CVICU, CCU, MSTICU	✓	466 rooms, 137 inpatient behavioral health beds	✓	✗ oncology services available	✓	✓	I
Henrico Doctors' Hospital 1602 Skipwith Road, 804-289-4500 or henricodoctors.com	✓	✓	✓	✗ [†]	CICU, SICU, NICU	✓	340 beds, 298 private rooms	✓	✓	✗	✓	II
Johnston-Willis Hospital 1401 Johnston Willis Drive, 804-483-5000 or johnstonwillismed.com	✓	✗	✗	✗ [†]	NICU, NSICU, MSICU	✓	292 private rooms	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Parham Doctors' Hospital 7700 E. Parham Road, 804-747-5600 or parhamdoctors.com	✗	✗	✗	✗ [†]	CCU	✓	200 private rooms, 24 be- havioral health unit beds, 36 rehab beds	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Retreat Doctors' Hospital 2621 Grove Ave., 804-254-5100 or retreatdoctors.com	✗	✗	✗	✗ [†]	CCU, ICU	✓	226 private rooms, 20 inpatient be- havioral health unit beds	✗	✗	✓ wound unit	✓	✗
Richmond Veterans Affairs Medical Center 1201 Broad Rock Blvd., 804-675-5000 or richmond.va.gov	✗	✓	✓	✓	MICU, SICU, CCU	✓	382 beds	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
TriCities Hospital 411 W. Randolph Road, Hopewell, 804-541-1600 or triditieshospital.com	✗	✗	✗	✗ [†]	ICU	✓	147 beds, 40 behavioral health beds	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
VCU Health/VCU Medical Center 1250 E. Marshall St., 804-828-9000 or vcuhealth.org	✓	✓	✓	✓	CICU, CSICU, ICU, MIICU, MRICU, NICU, NSICU, PICU, STICU	✓	837 beds	✓	✓	✓	✓	I

* Has family-practice pharmacy, nursing and radiology residence programs † Provides research via clinical trials

ICU ABBREVIATIONS: BICU: Behavioral; CCU/CSICU: Coronary/Cardiac Surgery; CICU: Cardiac; CVICU: Cardiovascular; CVSU: Cardiovascular Services Unit; ICU: Intensive Care Unit; IMCU: Intermediate Care Unit; IVICU: Interventional Cardiac Unit; MIICU: Medical Intermediate ICU; MICU: Medical; MRICU: Medical Respiratory; MSICU: Medical Surgical; NICU: Neonatal; NSICU: Neuroscience; NSTU: Neuroscience Telemetry Unit; PCU: Progressive Care; PICU: Pediatric; RICU: Renal; SICU: Surgical; STICU: Surgical Trauma

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BEAUTY

A RESTORATIVE RETURN

A skincare boutique expands its location and vision

By Kevin Johnson

Don't just call it a comeback; Skin + Beauty Haus founder Kay Ferguson sees the brand's new home, at 1919 W. Cary St. in the Fan, as a move toward becoming a local staple for a wellness-minded community of Richmonders.

"I wanted this to be like your neighborhood space that you come to and decompress, to take a load off, to just relax, and also have community here," Ferguson says.

The combination shop and spa, which opened last June, occupies 1,100 square feet and is owned by Ferguson, a Richmond native, and her husband. Clinical offerings include acne care treatments, dermaplaning, facials, Botox treatments administered by a physician assistant and wellness treatments, such as red light therapy. The retail side stocks

a variety of brands, including two lines formulated by Ferguson herself.

"Skin Humanity is an in-house brand; it's more of a body care and skincare line, so body oils, body butters, facial serums, that type of thing," she says. "Melanin Skin Pro is our other skincare line that's focused mostly on acne care, face washes and toners."

Ferguson's beauty business bonafides started with her first endeavor, Styletress, an e-commerce shop and retail store in Jackson Ward that opened in 2016, selling cosmetics, clothes and fashion accessories. A year later, the shop rebranded to Skin + Beauty Haus in the same space, expanding to include aesthetic practices.

The pandemic, however, halted momentum and forced Ferguson to pivot yet again. "I was just trying to make it work, but we ultimately closed the shop

in 2021," she says. "But when we closed, I said, 'OK, how can I still keep this going?' So, I offered online skincare consultations and help while looking for the right space." During that time, she developed her skincare lines and plotted a bigger return in size and scope.

"We wanted to reimagine it, but in a way that would be beneficial to what people need now. ... A lot of people don't think of skincare as something that's vital health care, but it really is, and I wanted to home in on that with a new space we can service more people in," she says.

Ferguson has also introduced a membership program that includes certain skin treatments and other benefits, such as product deals; plans start at \$79 per month. The shop's offerings are available by appointment Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. ■

COURTESY KAY FERGUSON



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A photograph of a bathroom vanity from the Schrock Boutique Series. The vanity features a white rectangular countertop with an integrated sink and a chrome faucet. Below the countertop are four teal-colored cabinets with silver vertical handles, supported by four dark grey legs. The wall behind the vanity is covered in a blue and green patterned wallpaper. A large round mirror with a wooden frame is mounted on the wall, flanked by two small brass light fixtures. On the countertop, there are folded yellow towels, a glass vase with white and purple flowers, and a small brass container. A yellow starburst graphic in the bottom left corner contains the text "With over 2000 colors to choose from". The website address "www.BetterKB.com" is displayed in the bottom right corner.

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